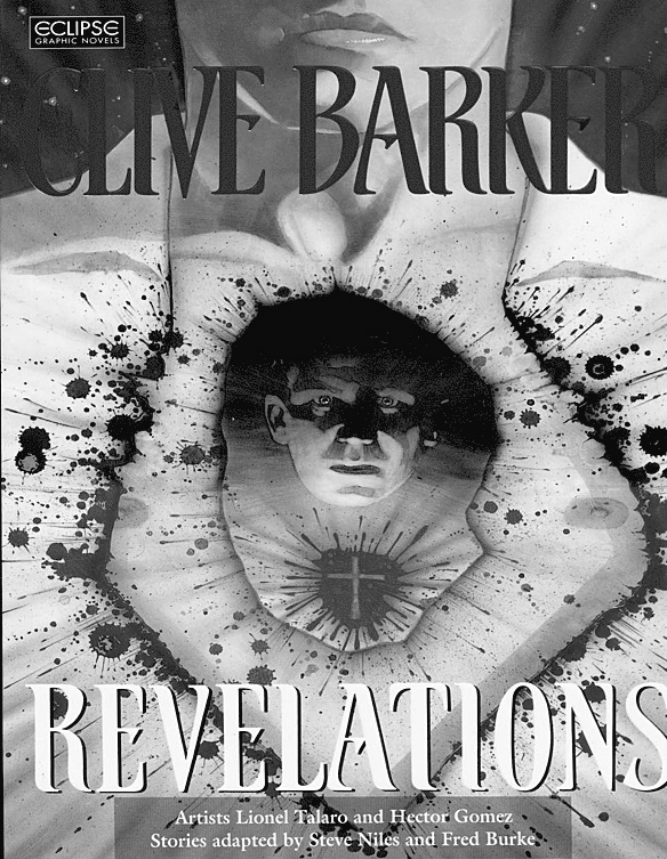


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CLIVE BARKER

The cover art is a black and white illustration. At the top, the lower half of a woman's face is visible, with her mouth slightly open. Below her, a large, irregular, splattered shape dominates the center. Inside this shape is a man's face, which appears to be a mask or a portrait that has been splattered with dark ink or blood. The splatters radiate outwards from the central face, creating a chaotic, starburst-like effect. The overall style is dark and horror-themed.

REVELATIONS

Artists Lionel Talaro and Hector Gomez
Stories adapted by Steve Niles and Fred Burke

CLIVE BARKER

REVELATIONS

Adapted by Steve Niles
Illustrated by Lionel Talaro

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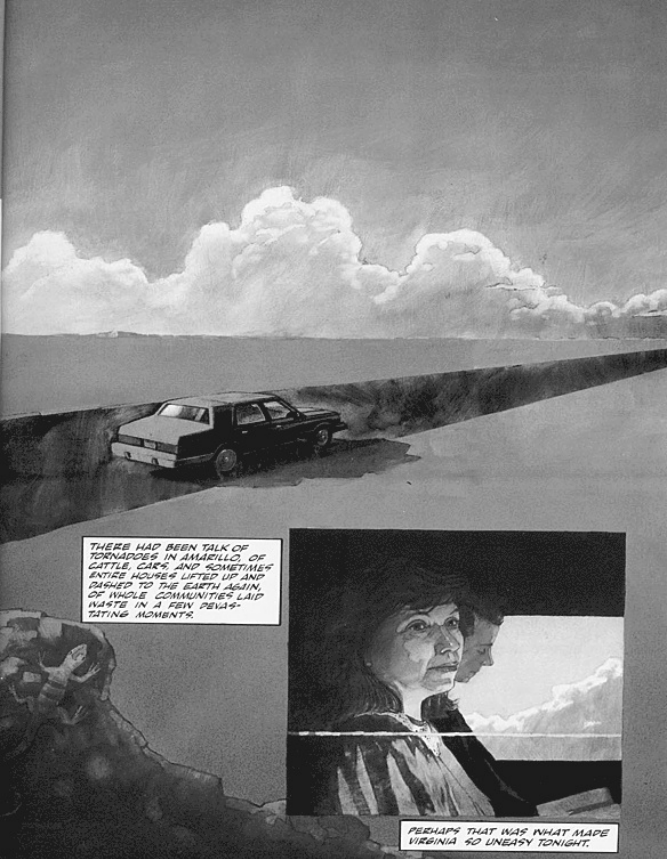
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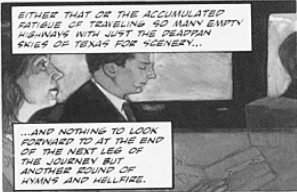
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THERE HAD BEEN TALK OF
TORNADOES IN AMARILLO, OF
CATTLE, CARS, AND SOMETIMES
ENTIRE HOUSES LIFTED UP AND
DASHED TO THE EARTH AGAIN,
OF WHOLE COMMUNITIES LAID
WASTE IN A FEW DEVAS-
TATING MOMENTS.



PERHAPS THAT WAS WHAT MADE
VIRGINIA SO UNEASY TONIGHT.



EITHER THAT OR THE ACCUMULATED
FATIGUE OF TRAVELING SO MANY EMPTY
HIGHWAYS WITH JUST THE DEADPAN
SKIES OF TEXAS FOR SCENERY...

...AND NOTHING TO LOOK
FORWARD TO AT THE END
OF THE NEXT LEG OF
THE JOURNEY BUT
ANOTHER ROUND OF
HYMNS AND HELLFIRE.



HER SPINE ACHING, SHE TRIED HER
BEST TO GET SOME SLEEP.

BUT THE HOT, STILL AIR CLUNG
AROUND HER NECK AND GAVE
HER DREAMS OF SUFFOCATION.



SHE GAVE UP HER ATTEMPT TO REST AND
CONTENTED HERSELF WITH WATCHING THE
FIELDS PASS AND COUNTING THE GRASS
ELEVATORS BRIGHT AGAINST THE
GATHERING THUNDERHEADS.





THE STORM CAME SUDDENLY AS EVENING FELL, LENDING DARKNESS TO DARKNESS, INSTANTLY PLUNGING THE AMARILLO-PAMPA HIGHWAY INTO WATERY NIGHT.



THE RAIN, THOUGH REFRESHING, HAD SOAKED THE ONLY DRESS JOHN APPROVED OF HER WEARING AT MEETINGS, UNEASE GROWN IN HER WITH EVERY MILE THEY COVERED TO PAMPA, LISTENING TO THE VEHEMENCE OF THE DOWNPOUR ON THE ROOF...

...AND TO HER HUSBAND JOHN, SPEAKING IN WHISPERS AT HER SIDE.

WHEREFORE HE SAITH AWAKE THOU THAT SLEEPEST...

AND RISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT.

SEE THEN THAT YE WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY, NOT AS FOOLS, BUT AS WISE...



REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL.

HE SURELY KNEW THE PASSAGES HE WAS READING BY HEART. HE QUOTED THEM OFTEN ENOUGH, AND WITH SUCH A MIXTURE OF FAMILIARITY AND FRESHNESS THAT THE WORDS MIGHT HAVE BEEN HIS, NOT PAUL'S.

THAT PASSION AND VIGOR WOULD MAKE JOHN GYER AMERICA'S GREATEST EVANGELIST, VIRGINIA HAD NO DOUBT OF THAT.



DURING THE BUZZLING, HECTIC WEEKS OF THE TRI-STATE TOUR, HER HUSBAND HAD DISPLAYED UNPRECEDENTED CONFIDENCE AND MATURITY.



HIS MESSAGE HAD LOST NONE OF ITS VEHEMENCE WITH THIS NEWFOUND PROFESSIONALISM--IT WAS STILL THAT OLD FASHIONED MIXTURE OF DAMNATION AND REDEMPTION THAT HE ALWAYS PROPOUNDED--BUT NOW HE HAD COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE GIFT.

SHE KNEW HIS RHETORIC, BOTH PHYSICAL AND VERBAL, SO WELL.

SOMETIMES SHE THOUGHT SHE KNEW EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM THERE WAS TO KNOW; THAT HE HAD NOTHING LEFT TO TELL HER THAT SHE TRULY WANTED TO HEAR.

TONIGHT THEY WOULD LIE IN SEPARATE BEDS, AND HE WOULD SLEEP THAT DEEP, EASY SLEEP THAT CAME READILY TO HIM, WHILE SHE SURREPTITIOUSLY SWALLOWED A PILL OR TWO TO BRING SOME WELCOME SERENITY.

BUT THEN THE SENTIMENT WAS PROBABLY MUTUAL. THEY HAD LONG AGO CEASED TO HAVE A MARRIAGE RECOGNIZABLE AS SUCH.

"SLEEP," HE HAD OFTEN SAID. "IT'S A TIME TO COMMUNE WITH THE LORD." EVER BELIEVER IN THE EFFICACY OF DREAMS, THOUGH HE DIDN'T TALK OF WHAT HE SAW IN THEM, THE TIME WOULD COME WHEN HE WOULD UNVEIL THE MAJESTY OF HIS VISIONS. SHE HAD NO DOUBT OF THAT.

ROOMS SEVEN AND EIGHT, I GOT THE KEY TO THE INTERCONNECTING DOOR, TOO.

GOOD.

LAST TWO IN THE PLACE. I'LL PRIVE THE CAR AROUND. THE ROOMS ARE AT THE FAR END.

THE INTERIOR OF THE TWO ROOMS
WAS A HYMN TO BANALITY.

THEY'D STAYED IN WHAT SEEMED LIKE
A THOUSAND CELLS LIKE THESE.

DAMN.

JOHN WAS INSENSITIVE TO HIS SUR-
ROUNDINGS, BUT TO VIRGINIA'S EYES
THESE ROOMS WERE AN APT MODEL
FOR PURGATORY. SOULLESS
LIMITS IN WHICH NOTHING HAD
HAPPENED NOR EVER WOULD.



THERE WAS NOTHING TO MARK THESE ROOMS
OUT AS DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHERS.



BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING
DIFFERENT IN HER TONIGHT.

IT WASN'T TALK OF TORNADOES THAT
HAD BROUGHT THIS STRANGENESS ON.
SHE FELT ODLY REMOVED FROM
HERSELF, AS THOUGH SHE WERE
WATCHING EVENTS THROUGH A VEIL
DENSER THAN THE WARM RAIN
FALLING OUTSIDE THE DOOR.



THERE WAS A STRANGE
NUMBNESS IN HER
LIMBS. SHE WAS
ALMOST SLEEPWALKING.

SHE TRIED TO CONTROL HER
SENSE OF DISLOCATION BY
RELAXING.

IT WAS EASIER
SAID THAN DONE.

SOMEBODY HAD A TELEVISION ON IN A
NEARBY ROOM, AND THE LATE-NIGHT
MOVIE WAS WORD-FOR-WORD CLEAR
THROUGH THE PAPER THIN WALLS.



ARE YOU
ALL RIGHT?

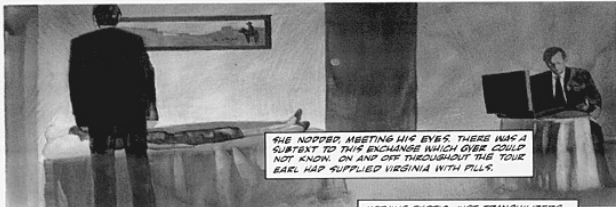


EARL, EVER SOLICITOUS.

YES, I'M FINE.
THANK YOU. A
LITTLE THIRSTY.



I'LL SEE IF I
CAN GET SOMETHING
FOR YOU TO DRINK. THEY
PROBABLY HAVE A
COKE MACHINE.



SHE NODDED, MEETING HIS EYES. THERE WAS A
SUBTEXT TO THIS EXCHANGE WHICH GYER COULD
NOT KNOW. ON AND OFF THROUGHOUT THE TOUR
EARL HAD SUPPLIED VIRGINIA WITH PILLS.

NOTHING EXOTIC. JUST TRANQUILIZERS
TO SOOTH HER INCREASINGLY JANGLED
NERVES, BUT THEY--LIKE STIMULANTS,
MAKEUP, AND JEWELRY--WERE NOT
LOOKED KINDLY UPON BY A MAN OF
GYER'S PRINCIPLES.



WHEN, BY CHANCE, HER
HUSBAND HAD DISCOVERED
THE DRUGS, THERE
HAD BEEN AN UGLY
SCENE. EARL HAD TAKEN
THE BRUNT OF HIS
EMPLOYEE'S IRE, FOR
WHICH VIRGINIA WAS
DEEPLY GRATEFUL.

THOUGH EARL WAS UNDER STRICT
INSTRUCTIONS NEVER TO REPEAT THE
CRIME, HE WAS SOON SUPPLYING HER
AGAIN. THEIR GUILT WAS AN ALMOST
PLEASURABLE SECRET BETWEEN
THEM. SHE REAP COMPLICITY IN
HIS EYES, AS HE DID IN HER'S.

"NO COCA-COLA FOR HER, EARL."

WELL, I JUST
THOUGHT WE
COULD MAKE
AN EXCEPTION.

EXCEPTION?

RHETORIC WAS IN THE AIR, AND
EARL CURSED HIS IDIOT TONGUE.

THE LORD
DOESN'T GIVE US
LAWS TO LIVE BY SO
THAT WE CAN MAKE
EXCEPTIONS. EARL
YOU KNOW BETTER
THAN THAT.

AT THAT MOMENT EARL DIDN'T MUCH CARE WHAT THE
LORD DID OR SAID. HIS CONCERN WAS FOR VIRGINIA.

SHE WAS STRONG, HE KNEW, DESPITE HER
DEEP SOUTH COURTESY AND THE ACCOMPANYING
RACISMS OF FAULTY, BUT NOBODY'S
STRENGTH WAS LIMITLESS, AND EARL SENSED
THAT VIRGINIA WAS CLOSE TO COLLAPSE.

"MAYBE YOU COULD GET
ME SOME ICE WATER?"

ICE WATER,
COMING
RIGHT UP.

SHE GAVE SO MUCH TO HER HUSBAND
MORE THAN ONCE IN THE FIRST WEEKS
OF THE TOUR EARL HAD THOUGHT THAT
PERHAPS SHE DESERVED BETTER.

WHY DON'T YOU
CALL THE OFFICE AND
HAVE SOMEONE BRING
IT OVER? I WANT TO
GO THROUGH NEXT
WEEK'S ITINERARY
WITH YOU.

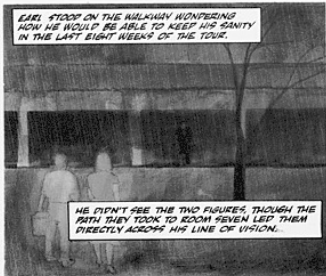
"IT'S NO PROBLEM..."

...REALLY, BESIDES,
I SHOULD CALL PAMPA,
AND TELL THEM WE'RE
DELAYED.



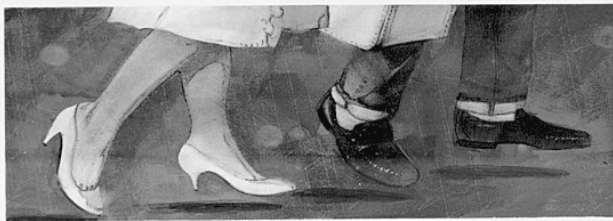
HE NEEDED AN EXCUSE TO HAVE SOME TIME TO HIMSELF. THE ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN VIRGINIA AND OWEN WAS DETERIORATING BY THE DAY.

THE COTTONWOOD TREE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LOT HUNG ITS BUILDING HEAD IN THE FURY OF THE DELUGE. HE KNEW EXACTLY HOW IT FELT.



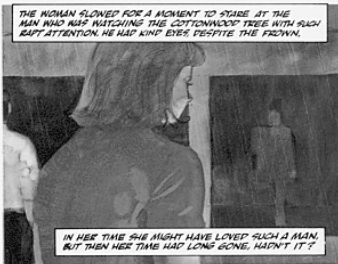
EARL STOOD ON THE WALKWAY WONDERING HOW HE WOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP HIS SANITY IN THE LAST EIGHT WEEKS OF THE TOUR.

HE DIDN'T SEE THE TWO FIGURES, THOUGH THE PATH THEY TOOK TO ROOM SEVEN LED THEM DIRECTLY ACROSS HIS LINE OF VISION.



THEY WALKED THROUGH THE DRENCHING RAIN FROM THE WASTEGROUND BEHIND THE MANAGER'S OFFICE--WHERE, BACK IN 1995, THEY HAD PARKED THEIR RED BUICK.

THOUGH THE RAIN FELL IN A STEADY TORRENT, IT LEFT THEM BOTH UNTOUCHED.



THE WOMAN SLOWED FOR A MOMENT TO STARE AT THE MAN WHO WAS WATCHING THE COTTONWOOD TREE WITH RAPT ATTENTION. HE HAD KIND EYES DESPITE THE FROWN.

IN HER TIME SHE MIGHT HAVE LOVED SUCH A MAN, BUT THEN HER TIME HAD LONG GONE, HADN'T IT?

BUT BEFORE SHE COULD DECIDE, BUCK, HER HUSBAND, TURNED BACK TO HER...



ARE YOU COMING, SADIE?

YES, BUCK, I'M WITH YOU.



A CHILL RAN DOWN EARL'S BACK, TOO MUCH STARING AT THE RAIN, THAT AND TOO MUCH FRUITLESS LONGING.



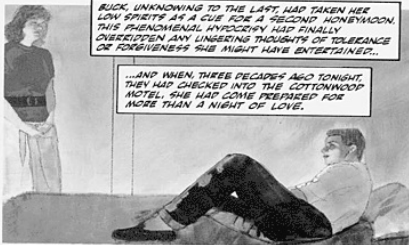
SADIE BURNING LOOKED AT HER HUSBAND. THE YEARS HAD NOT TEMPERED THE RESENTMENT SHE FELT TOWARD HIM, ANY MORE THAN THEY'D IMPROVED HIS SHIFTY FEATURES OR HIS TOO-EASY LAUGH.

SHE HAD NOT MUCH LIKED HIM ON JUNE 2, 1933, AND SHE DIDN'T MUCH LIKE HIM NOW, PRECISELY THIRTY YEARS ON.

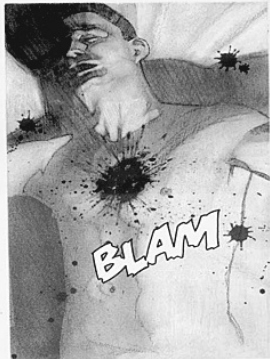


BUCK, UNKNOWNING TO THE LAST, HAD TAKEN HER LOW SPIRITS AS A CUE FOR A SECOND HONEYMOON. THIS PHENOMENAL HYPOCRISY HAD FINALLY OVERRIDDEN ANY LINGERING THOUGHTS OF TOLERANCE OR FORGIVENESS SHE MIGHT HAVE ENTERTAINED...

...AND WHEN, THREE PECADES AGO TONIGHT, THEY HAD CHECKED INTO THE COTTONWOOD MOTEL, SHE HAD COME PREPARED FOR MORE THAN A NIGHT OF LOVE.



BUT IT HAD LED TO SUCH GRUBBY BEHAVIOR THAT EVENTUALLY SHE HAD TIRED OF HIS ENDLESS RECEPTIONS.



THEY HAD TAKEN HER TO THE
CARSON COUNTY JAIL, AND AFTER
A FEW WEEKS, TO TRIAL.

SHE NEVER ONCE TRIED TO DENY THE
MURDER. THERE HAD BEEN ENOUGH
DECEPTION IN HER THIRTY-EIGHT
YEARS OF LIFE AS IT WAS.



AND SO WHEN THEY FOUND HER GUILTY,
THEY TOOK HER TO HUNTSVILLE STATE
PRISON, CHOSE A BRIGHT DAY THE
FOLLOWING OCTOBER, AND RUMOROUSLY
PASSED 2,250 VOLTS THROUGH HER
BODY, STOPPING HER UNREPENTANT
HEART ALMOST INSTANTLY.

AN EYE FOR AN EYE; A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH. SHE HAD BEEN
BROUGHT UP WITH SUCH SIMPLE EQUATIONS. SHE'D NOT
BEEN UNHAPPY TO DIE BY THE SAME MATHEMATICS.



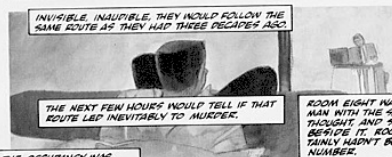
BUT TONIGHT SHE AND BUCK HAD ELECTED TO RETRACE THE JOURNEY THEY' TAKEN THIRTY YEARS BEFORE, TO SEE IF THEY COULD DISCOVER HOW AND WHY THEIR MARRIAGE HAD ENDED IN MURDER.

IT WAS A CHANCE OFFERED TO MANY DEAD LOVERS, THOUGH FEW, APPARENTLY, TOOK IT UP.



PERHAPS THE THOUGHT OF EXPERIENCING AGAIN THE CATASTROPHIC THAT HAD ENDED THEIR LIVES WAS TOO DISTASTEFUL. SADIE, HOWEVER, COULDN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF IT HAD ALL BEEN PREDESTINED.

THIS ONE-NIGHT STAND WOULD GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEST HISTORY.



INVISIBLE, INAUDIBLE, THEY WOULD FOLLOW THE SAME ROUTE AS THEY HAD THREE DECADES AGO.

THE NEXT FEW HOURS WOULD TELL IF THAT ROUTE LED INEVITABLY TO MURDER.

ROOM EIGHT WAS OCCUPIED BY THE MAN WITH THE SAD EYES, SADIE THOUGHT, AND SO WAS THE ROOM BESIDE IT, ROOM SEVEN--IT CERTAINLY HADN'T BEEN THEIR LUCKY NUMBER.

THE OCCUPANCY WAS NOT A PROBLEM. SADIE HAD LONG BECOME USED TO THE ETHEREAL STATE, TO HAUNTERING UNSEEN AMONG THE LIVING. IN SUCH A CONDITION SHE HAD ATTENDED HER NIECE'S WEDDING, AND LATER ON HER FATHER'S FUNERAL, STANDING BESIDE THE GRAVE WITH THE DEAD OLD MAN AND GOSSIPING ABOUT THE MOURNERS.

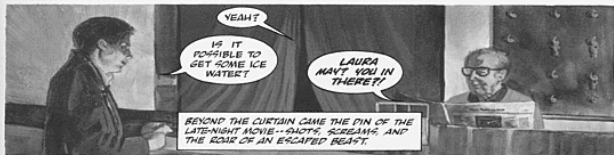


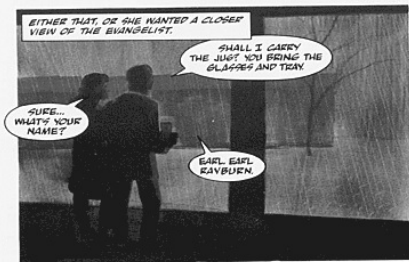
BUCK, HOWEVER--NEVER AN AGILE INDIVIDUAL--WAS MORE PRONE TO CARELESSNESS. SHE HOPED HE WOULD BE CAREFUL TONIGHT. AFTER ALL HE WANTED TO SEE THE EXPERIMENT THROUGH AS MUCH AS SHE DID.



AS SADIE MOVED THROUGH THE WALL AND INTO THE ROOM IN WHICH THEIR FATAL FARE HAD BEEN PLAYED OUT, SHE WONDERED IF THE SHOT HAD HURT HIM VERY MUCH.

SHE MUST ASK HIM TONIGHT, SHE THOUGHT, SHOULD THE OPPORTUNITY ARISE.









SOMETIMES SHE FELT HE COULD SEE RIGHT INTO HER, THAT ALL HER PRIVATE GUILT WAS AN OPEN BOOK TO HIM. SHE WAS CERTAIN THAT IF SHE GOT UP NOW AND ROTTED THROUGH HER BARS FOR MEDICATION, HE WOULD ASK HER WHAT SHE WAS DOING.

SHE'D BLURT THE TRUTH OUT FOR SURE. SHE DIDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO RESIST THE HEAT OF THOSE ACCUSING EYES.



THERE WAS AN EVASIVE QUALITY TO THE LIGHT IN THE ROOM. IT DISTRESSED HER, AND SHE WANTED TO CLOSE HER LIPS AGAINST ITS TRICKS.

ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE, THE LIGHT HAD CONJURED A MIRAGE AT THE END OFF THE BED, A MOUTH-WING FLICKER OF SUBSTANCE THAT HAD ALMOST CONGEALED IN THE AIR BEFORE FLITTING AWAY.



...AND THERE CAME OUT OF THE SMOKE LOCUSTS UPON THE EARTH...

SHE INSTANTLY RECOGNIZED THE PASSAGE; ITS IMAGERY WAS UNMISTAKABLE.

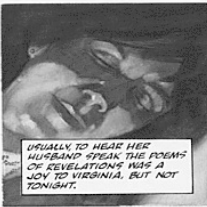
...AND UNTO THEM WAS GIVEN POWER, AS THE SCORPIONS OF THE EARTH HAVE POWER.

THE VERSE WAS FROM THE REVELATIONS OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE. HE HAD DECLAIMED THEM TIME AFTER TIME AT MEETINGS.

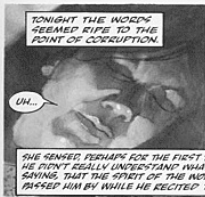


AND IT WAS COMMANDED THEM...

OVER LOVED REVELATIONS. ITS POETRY, INSTEAD OF COMING OUT OF HIM, CAME THROUGH HIM. HELPLESS IN ITS GRIP HE ROSE ON A SPIRAL OF EVER MORE AWESOME METAPHOR.



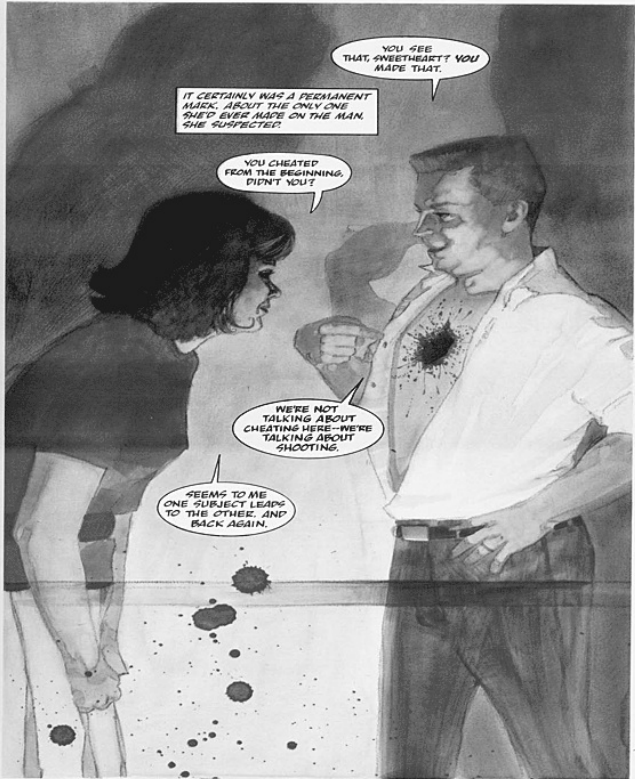
USUALLY TO HEAR HER HUSBAND SPEAK THE POEMS OF REVELATIONS WAS A JOY TO VIRGINIA, BUT NOT TONIGHT.



THE WOMAN WAS LYING, OF COURSE; THE WORDS DID DISTURB HER. THEY DISTURBED SADIE, TOO, BUT ONLY BECAUSE THEY SEEMED SO PITIFULLY MELODRAMATIC, A DRUG-DEAD DREAM OF ARMAGEDDON, MORE COMICAL THAN INTIMIDATING.







YOU SEE
THAT, SWEETHEART? YOU
MADE THAT.

IT CERTAINLY WAS A PERMANENT
MARK. ABOUT THE ONLY ONE
SHE'D EVER MADE ON THE MAN,
SHE SUSPECTED.

YOU CHEATED
FROM THE BEGINNING.
DIDN'T YOU?

WE'RE NOT
TALKING ABOUT
CHEATING HERE--WE'RE
TALKING ABOUT
SHOOTING.

SEEMS TO ME
ONE SUBJECT LEADS
TO THE OTHER, AND
BACK AGAIN.











WHY DON'T WE
GO TO MY ROOM?
I DON'T LIKE IT
OUT HERE.

WHAT
ABOUT YOUR
PAPA?



HE'LL BE
DEAD DRUNK
BY NOW. JUST
TAKE IT QUIETLY.
HE'LL NEVER
KNOW.

EARL WASN'T VERY HAPPY WITH THIS GAME PLAN.
IT WAS MORE THAN HIS JOB WAS WORTH TO BE
FOUND IN BED WITH LAURA MAY. HE WAS A
MARRIED MAN, EVEN IF HE HADN'T SEEN
BARBARA IN THREE MONTHS.



DON'T COME
IF YOU DON'T
WANT TO.

IT'S NOT
THAT.



IN A SENSE, THOUGH EARL COULDN'T KNOW IT
AT THE TIME, ALL THAT LAY AHEAD--THE
FARSE, THE BLOODLETTINGS, THE INEVITABLE
TRAGEDY--PIVOTED ON LAURA MAY UNCON-
SCIOUSLY WETTING HER LOWER LIP.

AH, SHIT.
YOU'RE TOO MUCH,
LAURA MAY, YOU
KNOW THAT?



SOMEWHERE OVER TOWARD
SKELLYTOWN THE CLOUDS GAVE OUT A
LOW ROLL OF THUNDER, LIKE A
CIRCUS DRUMMER BEFORE SOME
PARTICULARLY ELABORATE ACROBATICS.







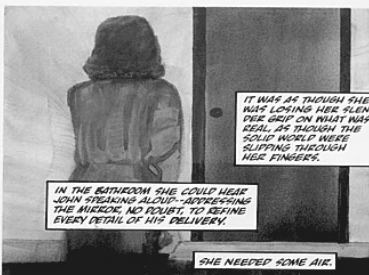
**MURDER!
FOR GOD'S SAKE,
SOMEBODY STOP
THEM!**



MURDER!



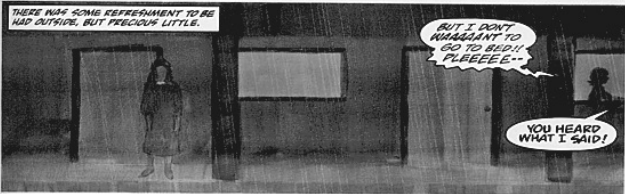
HER HEAD FELT SO LIGHT
IT MIGHT FLOAT OFF LIKE
A BALLOON. SELDOM IN
HER LIFE HAD SHE
FELT SO STRANGE.



IT WAS AS THOUGH SHE
WAS LOSING HER SLEN-
DER GRIP ON WHAT WAS
REAL, AS THOUGH THE
SOLID WORLD WERE
SLIPPING THROUGH
HER FINGERS.

IN THE BATHROOM SHE COULD HEAR
JOHN SPEAKING ALOUD--APPRESSING
THE MICRO, NO DOUBT, TO REFINES
EVERY DETAIL OF HIS DELIVERY.

SHE NEEDED SOME AIR.



THERE WAS SOME REFRESHMENT TO BE
HAD OUTSIDE, BUT PRECIOUS LITTLE.

BUT I DON'T
WANT TO
GO TO BED!!
PLEEEEEE--

YOU HEARD
WHAT I SAID!



FOR MAYBE TEN SECONDS
THE VOICE WAS MUSHY.
THEN IT BEGAN AGAIN, IN
A HIGHER KEY.

WHEEEEEEE!

GO ON, YOU
CRY. THERE'S PLENTY
OF REASON.



SHE TRUSTED UNHAPPINESS
IN PEOPLE. MORE AND MORE
IT WAS ALL SHE TRUSTED.
SADNESS WAS SO MUCH
MORE HONEST THAN THE
ARTIFICIAL BENIGNITY THAT
WAS ALL THE STYLE THESE
DAYS. THAT FACADE OF
EMPTY-HEADED OPTIMISM
THAT WAS PASTERED OVER
THE DESPAIR THAT EVERY-
ONE FELT IN THEIR HEART
OF HEARTS.

THE CHILD WAS EXPRESSING THAT WISE
PANIC NOW, AS IT CRIED IN THE NIGHT.
SHE SILENTLY APPLAUDED ITS HONESTY.

IN THE BATHROOM, JOHN
GYER GAVE SOME TIME
OVER TO THOUGHT.



HE COULD SMELL HIS OWN
STALE SWEAT. HE NEEDED
A SHOWER, AND THEN A
GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP
TOMORROW: PAMPA,
MEETINGS, SPEECHES,
THOUSANDS OF HANDS
TO BE SHAKEN AND
BLESSINGS TO BE
BESTOWED.



SOMETIMES HE FELT SO
TIRED, AND THEN HE'D
GET TO WONDERING IF
THE LORD COULDN'T
LIGHTEN HIS BURDEN
A LITTLE. BUT THAT
WAS THE DEVIL TALKING
IN HIS EAR, WASN'T IT?



HE KNEW BETTER THAN
TO PAY THAT SQUIRRELY
VOICE MUCH ATTENTION.
IF YOU LISTENED ONCE,
THE DOUBTS WOULD GET
HOLD. THE WAY THEY
HAD OF VIRGINIA.

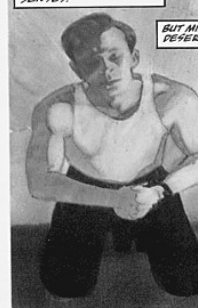


HE WOULD HAVE TO BRING
HER BACK TO THE PATH
OF THE RIGHTEOUS, MAKE
HER SEE THE DANGER
HER SOUL WAS IN. THERE
WOULD BE TEARS AND
COMPLAINTS; MAYBE SHE
WOULD BE BRUISED A
LITTLE.



BUT BRUISES HEAL.

HE TRIED TO FIND SOME
BENIGN WORDS, A GENTLE
PRAYER TO ASK FOR THE
STRENGTH TO FINISH
HIS TASK, AND TO BRING
VIRGINIA BACK TO HER
SENSES.



BUT MILDNESS HAD
DEFERRED HIM.



IT WAS THE VOCABULARY
OF REVELATIONS THAT
CAME BACK TO HIS LIPS.
UNBIDDEN, HE LET THE
WORDS SPILL OUT, EVEN
THOUGH THE FEVER IN
HIM BURNED BRIGHTER
WITH EVERY SYLLABLE
HE SPOKE.



THE BEDROOM, IT SEEMED, WAS
A MAUSOLEUM FOUNDED IN THE
NAME OF TRIVIA.

WHAT
DO YOU
THINK
?

THE THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS ALL LAURA
MAY'S DOING SHREAK EARL'S STOMACH. THE
WOMAN WAS CLEARLY VERGING ON LUNACY.

THIS IS MY
COLLECTION.

SO I
SEE.

I'VE BEEN COLLECTING SINCE I WAS SIX.
EVERYBODY LEAVES SOMETHING BEHIND. EVEN
IF IT'S ONLY A DEAD MATCH OR A TISSUE WITH
LIPSTICK ON IT. WE USED TO HAVE A MEXICAN
GIRL, OPHELIA, WHO CLEANED ROOMS
WHEN I WAS A CHILD.

IT STARTED AS A GAME.
REALLY, SHE'D ALWAYS BRING
ME SOMETHING FROM THE
GUESTS WHO'D LEFT. WHEN
SHE DIED I TOOK OVER
COLLECTING.

EARL BEGAN TO GRASP THE ABSURD POETRY OF THE MUSEUM. IN LAURA MAY'S NEAT BODY WAS ALL THE AMBITION OF A GREAT CURATOR.



NOT FOR HER MERE ART. SHE WAS COLLECTING KEEPSAKES OF A MORE INTIMATE NATURE.

YOU'VE GOT IT ALL MARKER.

OH, YES. IT WOULDN'T BE MUCH USE IF I DIDN'T KNOW WHO IT ALL BELONGED TO. NOW WOULD IT?

INCREDIBLE.

HE SUSPECTED SHE DIDN'T SHOW HER COLLECTION TO MANY PEOPLE. HE FELT ODDLY WONDERED TO BE VIEWING IT.

I'VE GOT SOME REALLY PRIZE THINGS STUFF I DON'T PUT ON DISPLAY.



OH?

THE TISSUE PAPER THAT LINED THE DRAWER RUSTLED AS SHE SHOWED HIM HER SELECTION OF SPECIAL ACQUISITIONS...



...A SOILED TISSUE FOUND BENEATH THE BED OF A HOLLYWOOD STAR WHO HAD TRAGICALLY DIED SIX WEEKS AFTER STAYING AT THE HOTEL...

...AN EMPTY BOOK OF MATCHES WHICH SHE HAD TRACED TO A HOMOSEXUAL BAR IN AMARILLO DISCARDED BY Y...



...A HEROIN NEEDLE CARELESSLY LEFT BY X...



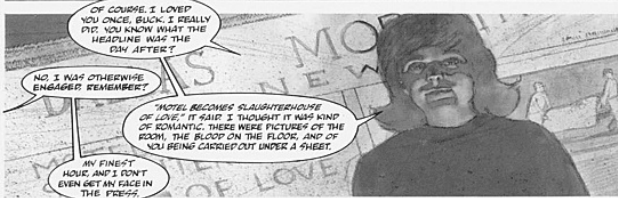
...THE NAMES SHE MENTIONED MEANT LITTLE OR NOTHING TO EARL, BUT HE PLAYED THE GAME AS HE FELT SHE WANTED IT TO BE PLAYED, MINGLING EXCLAMATIONS OF DISBELIEF WITH GENTLE LAUGHTER.





A SMITH AND WESSON .38, IN PRISTINE CONDITION. IT TOOK EARL ONLY A MOMENT TO REALIZE WHICH MOTEL GUEST THIS PIECE OF HISTORY HAD BELONGED TO.







I GOT THREE HUNDRED PROPOSALS OF MARRIAGE WHILE I WAS WAITING FOR THE CHAIR-- DID I EVER TELL YOU THAT?

OH, YEAH? DID THEY COME AND VISIT YOU? GIVE YOU A BIT OF THE OLD JAZZ TO KEEP YOUR MIND OFF THE BIG DAY?

NO.

JUST THINKING ABOUT IT'S GETTING ME COOKING, SADIE. WHY DON'T YOU COME AND GET IT WHILE IT'S HOT?

WE CAME HERE TO TALK, BUCK.

WE TALKED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. I DON'T WANT TO TALK NO MORE. NOW COME HERE YOU PROMISED.



NOW YOU'RE BEING SENSIBLE.

THE RAIN HAD COOLED VIRGINIA'S FACE SOMEWHAT, AND THE TRANQUILIZERS SHE'D TAKEN WERE FINALLY BEGINNING TO SOOTHE HER SYSTEM. IN THE BATHROOM, JOHN WAS STILL PRAYING, HIS VOICE RISING AND FALLING.



AS SHE WATCHED THE RAIN, VIRGINIA THOUGHT SHE HEARD A GROAN FROM THE NEXT ROOM.

SHE FROZE. THE GROAN CAME AGAIN, LOUDER. SHE FELT HERSELF BEGIN TO TREMBLE.





GIVE
A LITTLE, DAMN
YOU...

THE WORDS,
THOUGH
BLURRED, WERE
UNMISTAKABLE.

PLAY
THE GAME, WILL
YOU?

THERE WAS ANGER
IN THOSE WORDS.



VIRGINIA LOOKED
THROUGH INTO ROOM
EIGHT. THERE WAS A
SHADOW ON THE BED.
IT NEITHER DIS-
TRESSINGLY, AS IF
ATTEMPTING TO
DEVOUR ITSELF.

MORE VOICES ROSE FROM THE
SHADOW. NOT ONE VOICE THIS
TIME, BUT TWO.



THE WORDS WERE JUMBLED. IN HER GROWING PANIC SHE
COULD MAKE LITTLE SENSE OF THEM. SHE COULDN'T TURN
HER BACK ON THE SCENE, HOWEVER. SHE STARED, TRYING
TO MAKE SENSE OF THE SHIFTING CONFIGURATION.



A SMATTERING OF WORDS CAME CLEAR,
AND WITH THEM, A RECOGNITION.



SHE HEARD A WOMAN'S
VOICE PROTESTING. SHE
EVEN BEGAN TO SEE THE
SPEAKER, STRUGGLING
BENEATH A PARTNER.

HER FIRST INSTINCT HAD BEEN CORRECT.
IT WAS A DEVOURING, OF A KIND.

THAT BASTARD GRIN OF HIS MADE
SADIE'S TRIGGER FINGER ITCH.

THIS IS WHAT HE'D COME FOR
TONIGHT. NOT FOR CONVERSATION
ABOUT FAILED DREAMS, BUT TO
HUMILIATE HER THE WAY HE
HAD SO OFTEN IN THE PAST,
WHISPERING OBSCENITIES INTO
HER NECK WHILE HE PINNED
HER TO THE SHEETS.

THE PLEASURE HE TOOK IN HER
DISCOMFORT MADE HER SEETHE.

LET
GO OF
ME!

LET HER
ALONE.

WELL, WE'VE
GOT AN
AUDIENCE.

HOW MUCH CAN
SHE SEE OR HEAR
ENOUGH TO KNOW
WHO WE ARE?

KEEP
AWAY FROM
ME.

COME ON.
IT'S ONLY THE
CRAZY LADY.

YOU CAN'T HARM
ME NOW, WOMAN.
I'M ALREADY DEAD.
REMEMBER?

WHAT LITTLE CHANCE OF
RECONCILIATION THERE
HAD BEEN HAD DEGENER-
ATED INTO A BLOODY
FARCE. THE ONLY
SOLUTION FOR SADIE
WAS TO GET OUT, LEAV-
ING POOR VIRGINIA TO
MAKE WHATEVER SENSE OF
IT SHE COULD.

THE LONGER SHE
STAYED TO FIGHT WITH
BUCK, THE WORSE THE
SITUATION WOULD
BECOME FOR ALL
THREE OF THEM.

WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?

OUT.







DON'T TALK NONSENSE! I ASKED HIM TO SUPPLY THEM. HE DIDN'T WANT TO DEFEY YOU JOHN. IT WAS ME ALL ALONG.

NO. YOU WON'T SAVE HIM. NOT THIS TIME. HE'S WORKED TO SUBVERT ME ALL ALONG. I SEE THAT NOW. WORKED TO HARM MY CREWDE THROUGH YOU. WELL I'M WIFE TO HIM NOW. OH YES. OH YES!



WHERE IS HE? GONE FOR MORE OF THE SAME FILTH?

NO! I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S GONE.

YOU PRAY, WOMAN. YOU GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES AND THANK THE LORD I'M HERE TO SAVE YOU FROM SATAN.



HER BLEARY EYES CAME TO REST ON A FEW TABLETS STILL ON THE FLOOR. ALL WAS NOT QUITE LOST.

BUT, SOMEONE HAD THEIR EYES ON HER.



HER HEART SEEMED TO LOSE ITS RHYTHM AS SHE REMEMBERED THE SHADOWS IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR. THERE HAD BEEN TWO. ONE HAD DEPARTED, BUT THE OTHER...?



IT WAS STARING AT HER. SHE COULD SEE ITS EYES. HER TENUOUS GRASP OF ITS EXISTENCE WAS IMPROVING.



AND THEN, AS HER OUTSTRETCHED HAND BRUSHED AGAINST ITS SMOKE FORM, AN ENTIRE PORTRAIT OF HER ACCOSTER SPRANG INTO VIEW IN FRONT OF HER.

WAS THIS MOORE OF HER DREAM, SPILLING INTO THE LIVING WORLD?

PERHAPS JOHN HAD BEEN
CORRECT ALL ALONG.

PERHAPS SHE HAD
INVITED THIS LUNACY
TO HERSELF WITH THE
VERY TABLETS SHE
HAD EVEN NOW
TREADING TO FINDER
UNDERFOOT.

WAS IT HER IMAGINATION,
OR HAD IT OPENED ITS ARMS,
AS IF TO EMBRACE HER?

BEFORE SHE COULD
STOP, SHE WAS
TOPPLING BACKWARDS.

AGAIN SHE MADE CONTACT WITH THE
DREAM-THING; AGAIN THE WHOLE
HORRID PICTURE APPEARED IN FRONT
OF HER, BUT THIS TIME IT DIDN'T
DISAPPEAR, BECAUSE THE APPARITION
HAD SNATCHED AT HER HAND
AND WAS GRASPING IT TIGHT.

UNABLE TO RESIST, SHE MET ITS GAZE.
THEY WERE NOT THE DEVIL'S EYES.
THEY WERE STUPID, EVEN COMICAL.

APPARENTLY SHE WAS NOT AFRAID.
HE WAS NO DEMON. IT WAS A
ILLUSION, BROUGHT ON BY EX-
HAUSTION AND PILLS. IT COULD
DO HER NO HARM.

THAT'S BETTER.
YOU JUST WANT
A BIT OF THE
OLD JAZZ, DON'T
YOU, GINNIE?

YOU DON'T EXIST. YOU'RE
ONLY IN MY MIND, LIKE JOHN
SAID. THE PILLS MADE YOU.
THE PILLS DID IT ALL.

YOU'RE NOT REAL,
ARE YOU? I'M
RIGHT, AREN'T I?

CERTAINLY.
I'M JUST A DREAM.
THAT'S ALL.

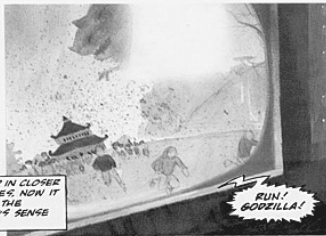
NO NEED TO FIGHT
ME, IS THERE? I'LL HAVE
COME AND GONE BEFORE
YOU KNOW IT.

HE WASN'T CERTAIN IF SHE
HEARD HIM, BUT NO MATTER.
HE COULD READILY MAKE
HIS INTENTIONS APPARENT.



HE HAD LEFT THEIR ROOM WITH THE GIRL WHO'D BROUGHT THE ICE WATER, AND THEY CERTAINLY WOULDN'T BE TAKING A WALK TOGETHER IN WEATHER LIKE THIS.

THE THUNDER HAD MOVED IN CLOSER IN THE LAST FEW MINUTES, NOW IT WAS ALMOST OVERHEAD. THE LIGHTNING FUELED GYER'S SENSE OF OCCASION.



THE LATE MOVIE WAS NEARING ITS CLIMAX, THE SOUND TURNED UP DEAFENINGLY LOUD. THE WHOLE SCENE STANK OF BOURBON AND DEFEATIVITY, GYER MADE A NOTE OF IT FOR FUTURE USE IN THE PULPIT.



A CHILL BLEW IN FROM THE OFFICE. ALL THE WAY HERE HE'D HAD A SENSE OF BEING FOLLOWED, YET THERE WAS NOBODY ON HIS HEELS. HE CANCELLED HIS SUSPICION.



HIS BOMBAST AMAZED HER. SHE'D EXPECTED THIS SUBSPECIES TO BE EXTINCT BY NOW. COULD SUCH MELODRAMA BE CREDIBLE IN THIS SOPHISTICATED AGE?

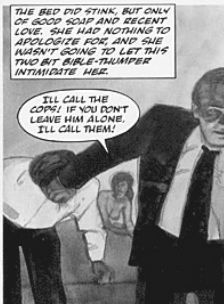


HE WOULD NOT BE PLEASED WITH THE SCENE THAT AWAITED HIM IN LAURA MAY'S ROOM.

EARL? EARL, ANSWER ME!

SADIE HAD NEVER MUCH LIKED CHURCH PEOPLE, BUT THIS EXAMPLE WAS PARTICULARLY OFFENSIVE; THERE WAS MORE THAN A WHIFF OF MALICE BENEATH THE FLATULENCE.

SADIE HAD ALREADY BEEN THERE. SHE HAD WATCHED THE LOVERS FOR A LITTLE WHILE, UNTIL THEIR PASSION BECAME TOO MUCH FOR HER AND HAD DRIVEN HER OUT TO COOL HERSELF BY WATCHING THE RAIN.



SOMETIMES WHEN THE DAYS WERE LONG AND LONELY, LAURA MAY HAD DAYDREAMED DARK MEN LIKE THE EVANGELIST. SHE HAD IMAGINED THEM COMING BEFORE TORNADOES, WEATHERED IN DUST. SHE HAD PICTURED HERSELF LIFTED UP BY THEM-- ONLY HOLE AGAINST HER WILL--AND TAKEN AWAY.



BUT THIS MAN WHO HAD LAIN IN HER BED TONIGHT... IF HE WERE TO DIE AT THE HANDS OF GYER, WHOSE IMAGE SHE HAD CONJURED IN HER DESPERATION, SHE WOULD NEVER FORGIVE HERSELF.



WHAT'S GOING ON?

NEVER MIND. JUST CALL ALVIN AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT OR WE'RE GOING TO HAVE ANOTHER MURDER ON OUR HANDS.

THE THOUGHT OF SLAUGHTER GALVANIZED MILTON GYER. HE AND LAURA MAY KNEW THAT, ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS, ALVIN BAKER AND HIS DEPUTY COULD BE A LONG TIME COMING.



A THRILL OF RECOGNITION MADE SAPIE'S SCALP TINGLE AS HER EYES ALIGHTED ON HER 33. SO IT WAS LAURA MAY WHO HAD FOUND THE GUN. THE WHEY-FACED SIX-YEAR-OLD WHO HAD BEEN RUNNING UP AND DOWN THE WALKWAY ALL THAT EVENING THIRTY YEARS AGO, PLAYING GAMES WITH HERSELF AND SINGING SONGS IN THE HOT STILL AIR.



WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT YOU BEEN DOING, LAURA MAY?

NEVER MIND, PA. THERE'S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN.

BUT THERE'S MEN OUT THERE--

I KNOW, I KNOW. I WANT YOU TO CALL THE SHERIFF IN PANNHOLE. UNDERSTAND?



IN THE MEANWHILE, GOD ALONE KNEW WHAT THE MAD-PER PREACHER WOULD BE CAPABLE OF.



IT DELIGHTED SAPIE TO SEE THE MURDER WEAPON AGAIN.

MAYBE, SHE THOUGHT, I HAVE LEFT SOME SIGN OF MYSELF TO HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE. MAYBE I AM MORE THAN A HEADLINE ON A YELLOWED NEWSPAPER, A DIMMING MEMORY IN AGING HEADS.



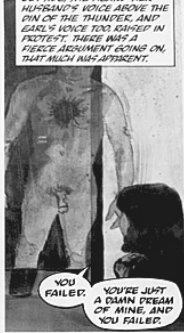
VIRGINIA LOOKED AT THE SEEDY
FIGURE LEANING ON THE DOOR
LINTEL ACROSS FROM HER.

SHE HAD LET THE DELUSION SHE HAD
CONJURED HAVE WHAT WAY IT WOULD WITH
HER, AND NEVER IN HER FORTY-ODD YEARS
HAD SHE HEARD SUCH DEPRAVITY PROMISED.



BUT THOUGH THE
SHADOW HAD COME
AT HER AGAIN AND
AGAIN, IT HAD
FAILED TO CARRY
ONE ACT OF VIOLATION THROUGH.
THREE TIMES IT
HAD TRIED, THREE
TIMES THE URGENT
WORDS WHISPERED
IN HER EAR HAD
NOT BEEN
REALIZED.

IT'S FACE WAS CLEAR ENOUGH
FOR HER TO READ THE RAF-
FLEMENT AND SHAME IN ITS
FEATURES. IT VIEWED HER,
SHE THOUGHT, WITH
MURDER ON ITS MIND.



OUTSIDE, SHE HEARD HER
HUSBAND'S VOICE ABOVE THE
PIN OF THE THUNDER, AND
EARL'S VOICE TOO, RAISED IN
PROTEST, THERE WAS A
FIERCE ARGUMENT GOING ON,
THAT MUCH WAS APPARENT.

YOU
FAILED.

YOU'RE JUST
A DAMN DREAM
OF MINE, AND
YOU FAILED.



SHE DIDN'T UNDER-
STAND WHY IT HADN'T
EVAPORATED, BUT
ITS FAILED RAFFES
LEFT IT BEREFT OF
POWER OVER HER.

I'M
LEAVING

WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?

OUT.
TO HELP
EARL.



NO, I HAVEN'T
FINISHED WITH YOU.

YOU'RE JUST
A PHANTOM.
YOU CAN'T
STOP ME.

I'M NO DELUSION, WOMAN.
I'M BUCK PURNING, THIRTY
YEARS AGO I WAS SHOT DEAD
IN THIS VERY ROOM. JUST
ABOUT WHERE YOU'RE
STANDING IN FACT.



"WE CAME BACK TONIGHT, SAPIE AND
I. A ONE NIGHT STAND AT THE
SLAUGHTERHOUSE OF LOVE. THAT'S
WHAT THEY CALLED THIS PLACE. DID
YOU KNOW THAT?"

PEOPLE USED TO COME HERE FROM ALL OVER, JUST TO SEE WHERE SADIE BURNING SHOT HER HUSBAND BUCK. SICK PEOPLE, VIRGINIA. DON'T YOU THINK MORE INTERESTED IN MURDER THAN LOVE. NOT ME. I'VE ALWAYS LIKED LOVE. YOU KNOW? ALMOST THE ONLY THING I'VE EVER HAD MUCH OF A TALENT FOR IN FACT.

YOU LIED TO ME. YOU USED ME.

I HAVEN'T FINISHED YET. IN FACT I'VE BARELY STARTED

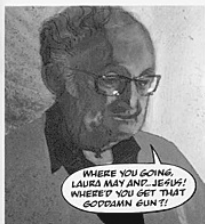
BUT THIS TIME SHE WAS READY FOR HIM.

HE WASN'T GOING TO HUMILIATE HIMSELF WITH PURSUIT. SHE WOULD HAVE TO COME BACK. WOULDN'T SHE? IF SHE TOLD HER COMPANIONS WHAT SHE'D SEEN, THEY'D CALL HER CRAZY. MAYBE LOOK HER UP WHERE HE COULD HAVE HER ALL TO HIMSELF. NO. HE HAD A WINNER HERE.

I'LL BE WAITING!
YOU HEAR ME, BITCH?
I'LL BE WAITING!

SHE WOULD RETURN SOAKED TO THE SKIN, HER DRESS CLINGING TO HER IN A DOZEN FETCHING WAYS. PANICLY FERNAP'S, TERRIFUL, TOO WEAK TO RESIST HIS OVERTURES.

THEY'D MAKE MUSIC THEN. OH YEA.
UNTIL SHE BEGGED HIM TO STOP.







PLEASE, LAURA MAY...
GET OUT OF HERE. HE'S
LOST HIS MIND.

IF YOU
DON'T LET GO
OF HIM...

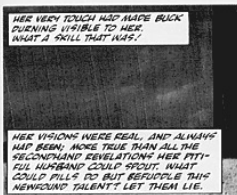
YEST WHAT
WILL YOU DO,
MADAM?

I'LL SHOOT!
I WILL!
I'LL SHOOT!

OVER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
OFFICE BUILDING VIRGINIA SPOTTED
ONE OF THE PILL BOTTLES GYER
HAD THROWN INTO THE MUD.



BUT SHE DIDN'T NEED PILLS ANYMORE.
DID SHE? SHE'D SPOKEN WITH A
DEAD MAN.



HER VERY TOUCH HAD MADE BUCK
TURNING VISIBLE TO HER.
WHAT A SKILL THAT WAS!

HER VISIONS WERE REAL, AND ALWAYS
HAD BEEN; MORE TRUE THAN ALL THE
SECONDHAND REVELATIONS HER PITI-
FUL HUSBAND COULD SPOUT. WHAT
COULD PILLS DO BUT BEFUDDLE THIS
NEWFOUND TALENT? LET THEM LIE.



WAS THERE
BEEN AN
ACCIDENT?

AS THE WORDS LEFT
THE WOMAN'S LIPS...



BLAM

JOHN.

BEFORE THE ECHOES OF THE SHOT
HAD DIED, SHE WAS MAKING HER
WAY TOWARDS THEIR SOURCE, A
PRAYER COMING AS SHE RAN. SHE
PRAYED NOT THAT THE SCENARIO
SHE HAD IMAGINED WAS WRONG,
BUT RATHER THAT GOD WOULD
FORGIVE HER FOR WILLING
IT TRUE.



THE SCENE SHE FOUND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BUILDING CONFOUNDED ALL HER EXPECTATIONS.

EVEN AS VIRGINIA'S EYES SETTLED ON LAURA MAY, A FIGURE STEPPED THROUGH THE RAIN...

OH LORD, I THANK YOU.



LAURA MAY CLEARLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW SHE'D DROPPED THE GUN. VIRGINIA KNEIN, SHE COULD SEE THE PHANTOM, ALBEIT FLEETINGLY, AND SHE GUESSED ITS IDENTITY.



DON'T BE DEAD, EARL. I BEG YOU, DON'T BE DEAD!



MISSED ME BY A MILE.

...I THANK YOU FOR PRESERVING THIS, YOUR INSTRUMENT, IN HIS HOUR OF NEED...

VIRGINIA SHUT OUT THE IDIOT DRIVER. THIS WAS THE MAN WHO HAD CONVINCED HER SO DEEPLY OF HER OWN DELUSORY STATE THAT SHE'D GIVEN HERSELF TO BUCK BURNING.



WELL, NO MORE. SHE'D BEEN TERRORIZED ENOUGH. SHE'D SEEN SADDIE ACT UPON THE REAL WORLD. SHE'D FELT BUCK DO THE SAME.

THE TIME WAS NOW RIFE TO REVERSE THE PROCEDURE.



IS THIS WISE?

VIRGINIA DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS INSIDOM ANYHOW? NOT THE STALE RHETORIC OF DEAR PROPHETS.

MAYBE INSIDOM WAS LAURA MAY AND EARL EMBRACING IN THE MUD, CARELESS OF THE PRAYERS OVER WAS SPENDING.



NOT BUCK? SURELY NOT.

YOU POOR LAMB.

HE ATTACKED ME.

I'M NO LAMB, NOT ANYMORE.



OR PERHAPS INSIDOM WAS FINDING THE GANCER IN YOUR LIFE AND ROOTING IT OUT ONCE AND FOR ALL. GUN IN HAND SHE HEADED BACK TO ROOM SEVEN.

REALIZING THAT THE WOMAN WAS PERFECTLY IN CHARGE OF HER DESTINY, SADIE HUNG BACK, FEARFUL THAT HER PRESENCE WOULD ALERT BUCK.



YOU CAME BACK.

I KNEW YOU WOULD.

THEY ALWAYS DO.

I WANT YOU TO SHOW YOURSELF...



I'M NAKED AS A BABE AS IT IS. WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO. SKIN MYSELF MIGHT BE FUN, AT THAT.

SHOW YOURSELF TO JOHN, MY HUSBAND. MAKE HIM SEE HIS ERROR.

OH, POOR JOHN. I DON'T THINK HE WANTS TO SEE ME, DO YOU?



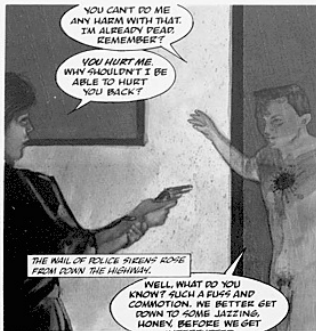
HE THINKS I'M INSANE.

INSANITY CAN BE VERY USEFUL THEY ALMOST SAVED SADIE FROM OLD SPIRKY ON A PLEA OF INSANITY. BUT SHE WAS TOO NON-EST FOR HER OWN GOOD. SHE NEVER HAD MUCH SENSE.

BUT YOU...NOW, I THINK YOU KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU.

COME AND GET IT VIRGINIA. GRUB'S UP.

NOT THIS TIME.



HAD HE BEEN THERE ALL ALONG,
OR WAS HE COMING OUT OF THE
RAIN, PRAYERS DONE TO READ
REVELATIONS TO HIS EXING WIFET

SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW.

SUDDENLY THERE WAS NOTHING IN ROOM SEVEN BUT
VIRGINIA, HER DYING HUSBAND, AND THE SOUND OF THE RAIN.

NOW JOHN WOULD NEVER KNOW.
THAT WAS THE PITY OF IT. HE
COULD NEVER BE AWARE TO
CONCEDE HIS STUPIDITY AND
REGRET HIS APOLOGANCE.

NOT THIS SIDE OF THE GRAVE.
ANYHOW. HE WAS SAFE, DAMN
HIM, AND SHE WAS LEFT WITH A
SMOKING GUN IN HER HAND.

PUT DOWN THE
GUN AND COME
OUT OF THERE!

THE VOICE FROM THE LOT SOUNDED
HARSH AND UNCOMPROMISING.

VIRGINIA DIDN'T ANSWER.

YOU HEAR ME IN
THERE? THIS IS SHERR-
IFF BAKER. THE PLACE IS
SURROUNDED, SO COME OUT
OR YOU'RE DEAD.

THEY WOULDN'T EXECUTE HER FOR WHAT SHE'D DONE,
THE WAY THEY HAD SAPIE, BUT SHE'D BE IN PRISON FOR
A LONG TIME, AND SHE WAS TIRED OF FIGHTING.

BETTER
TO FINISH
HERE.

IS THAT
WISE?

THEY'LL LOCK
ME AWAY. I COULDN'T
FACE THAT.

TRUE. THEY'LL PUT
YOU BEHIND BARS.
BUT IT WON'T BE
FOR LONG.

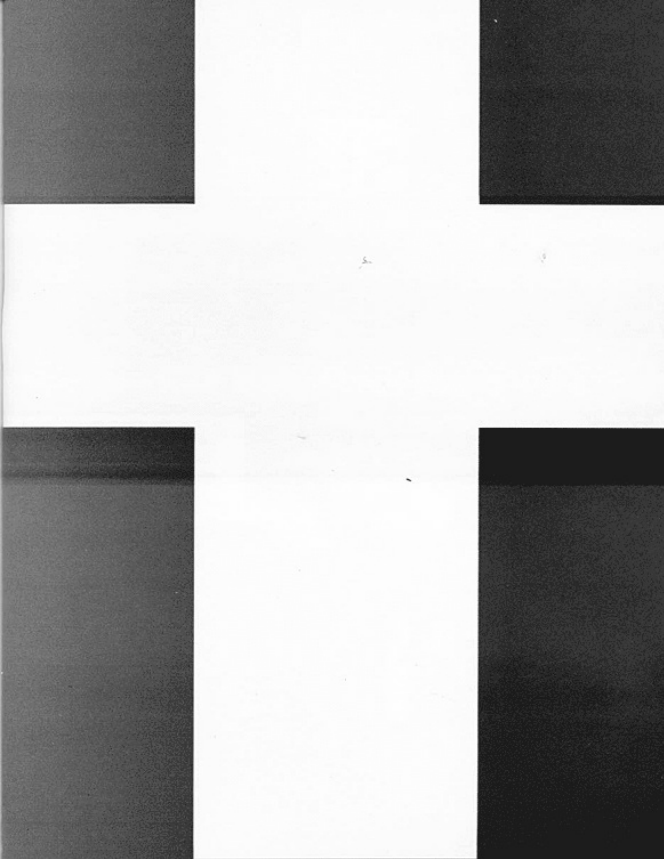
YOU DIDN'T
MEAN TO. YOU
WERE AIMING
AT BUCK.

YOU MUST BE
JOKING. I JUST
SHOT MY HUSBAND
IN COLD BLOOD.

WAS I?
I WONDER.



THE END

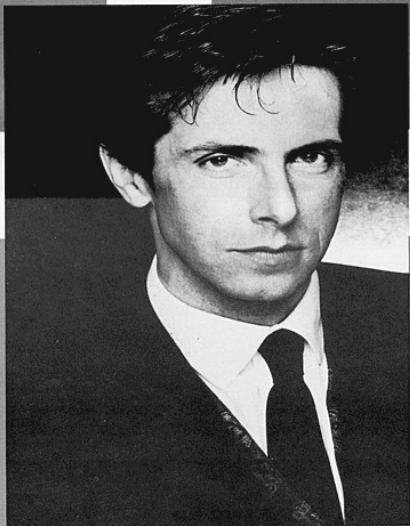


CLIVE BARKER

CLIVE BARKER was born in 1952 in Liverpool, and now resides in Beverly Hills. Clive Barker's extraordinary stories have captivated millions of readers and filmgoers. With his short stories in the *Books of Blood* and such best-selling novels as *Weaveworld*, *Cabal*, *The Damnation Game*, *The Great and Secret Show*, and *Imajica*; in his spectacular films *Hellraiser*, *Hellbound*, and *Nightbreed*; and through the graphic novel adaptations of his stories and ideas in *Tapping the Vein*, *Son of Celluloid*,

Revelations, *Hellraiser*, and *Nightbreed*, Barker has utilized all aspects of popular culture to create an indelible and unique vision of modern horror and fantasy. Two coffee table books about Barker—*Clive Barker, Illustrator*, which includes character designs for many

of his films; and *Pandemonium*, which features a never-before-published play—offer insight into the mind of the acclaimed fantasist. Upcoming Barker stories to be illustrated by modern masters of sequential art include *Dread*, *Age of Desire*, *Life of Death*, *Rawhead Rex*, and *The Great and Secret Show*.





Steve Niles

STEVE NILES spends his time touring and recording with the band Gray Matter, when he's not slaving over his typewriter. His first work in publishing was the production of a limited edition portfolio of Clive Barker's *Books of Blood* cover illustrations. For Eclipse/Arcane he edited and contributed to a four-volume comics horror anthology, *Fly in My Eye*, *Saturday Mourning Fly in My Eye*, *Daughters of Fly in My Eye*, and the upcoming *Fly in My Eye Exposed*. He has also edited for Eclipse/Arcane *Clive Barker, Illustrator*, a coffee table book of Barker's artwork. He has adapted Clive Barker's *Son of Celluloid*, and *Revelations* for Eclipse, as well as the Richard Matheson vampire novel *I Am Legend*. Among his upcoming comics adaptations are Barker's *How Spoilers Bleed*, *Down Satan*, and *Rawhead Rex*. His other Eclipse credits include editing and contributing to the comics anthology *Anxiety Times* and editing the graphic adaptation of Fritz Lang's *M*, by Jon J Muth. Niles continues to write original comic stories for various publications and to survive the life of a musician in Washington, DC.

Lionel Talaro

LIONEL TALARO was born June 2 1960, in San Diego, California, where he still resides. He attended San Diego City College and Southern California Art Institute in Calabasas, California, where he developed his technique, a combination of gouache and pencil on gessoed board. Since 1986, he has created illustrations for advertising and a wide variety of publications. His clients include Budweiser, Twentieth Century Fox, United Airlines and Infotronics. *Revelations* marks his comics premiere. He is illustrating the upcoming Clive Barker graphic novel *Sex, Death and Starshine*.

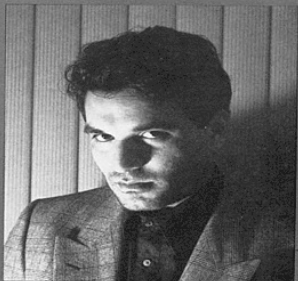


Photo © 1991 Anna Talaro

June 2, 1955

**Buck and Sadie Durning check into the Cottonwood Motel.
Buck Durning never checks out.**



**Four months later, Sadie Durning is executed.
For her husband's murder.**

June 2, 1985

**John and Virginia Gyer check into the Cottonwood Motel,
where the ghosts of Buck and Sadie have returned
to relive the fateful drama of three decades before.
It is to be a night of...**

REVELATIONS

**Acclaimed fantasist Clive Barker brings us
a ghost story of compelling violence and haunting beauty,
in which the visions of a Christian evangelist
and the dreams of his pill-popping wife
do battle on a night that can only end in tragedy.**

ECLIPSE  BOOKS®

WHY COULD VANESSA NEVER RESIST THE ROAD THAT HAD NO SIGNPOST MARKING IT, THE TRACK THAT LED TO GOD ALONE KNEW WHERE?

HER ENTHUSIASM FOR FOLLOWING HER NOSE HAD GOT HER INTO TROUBLE OFTEN ENOUGH IN THE PAST. A NEAR-FATAL NIGHT SPENT LOST IN THE ALPS, THAT EPISODE IN MARRAKECH THAT HAD ALMOST ENDED IN RAPE, THE ADVENTURE WITH THE SWORD-SWALLOWER'S APPRENTICE IN THE WILDS OF LOWER MANHATTAN.

HERE, FOR INSTANCE, THIS ROAD THAT MEANDERED TOWARD THE COAST OF KITHNOS, WHAT COULD IT POSSIBLY OFFER HER, BUT AN UNEVENTFUL DRIVE THROUGH THE SCRUBLAND HEREABOUTS -- A CHANCE ENCOUNTER WITH A GOAT ALONG THE WAY -- AND A VIEW FROM THE CLIFFS OF THE BLUE AEGEAN.

BUT THE OTHER HIGHWAYS THAT LED FROM THIS CROSSROADS WERE SO CLEARLY MARKED: ONE TO LOUTRA, WITH ITS RUINED VENETIAN FORT, THE OTHER TO ERIOPTI. SHE HAD VISITED NEITHER VILLAGE, BUT THE FACT THAT THEY WERE SO CLEARLY NAMED SERIOUSLY MARKED THEIR ATTRACTION FOR HER.

THE ISLAND WAS NO PARADISE. UNLIKE SANTORINI, WITH ITS PICTURESQUE VOLCANO, OR MYKONOS -- THE SOUVENIR OF THE CYCLADES -- WITH ITS PLUSH BEACHES AND PLUSHIER HOTELS, KITHNOS COULD BOAST NOTHING THAT MIGHT DRAW THE TOURIST. THAT, IN SHORT, WAS WHY SHE WAS HERE. AS FAR FROM THE CROWD AS SHE COULD CONSPIRE TO GET, THIS TRACK, NO DOUBT, WOULD TAKE HER FARTHER STILL.

AND YET DESPITE WHAT BITTER EXPERIENCE SHOULD HAVE TAUGHT HER, WHEN THE CHOICE LAY BETWEEN THE MARKED ROUTE AND THE UNMARKED, SHE WOULD ALWAYS, WITHOUT QUESTION, TAKE THE LATTER.

THIS OTHER ROAD, HOWEVER, THOUGH IT MIGHT -- INDEED PROBABLY DID -- LEAD NOWHERE, AT LEAST LEAD TO AN UNNAMED NOWHERE, THAT WAS, NO SMALL RECOMMENDATION, THUS FUELED BY SHEER PERVERSITY, SHE SET OFF ALONG IT.





THE AIR WAS FRAGRANT WITH SAND LILIES AND WILD THYME--SCENTS THAT THE PETROL STENCH INSIDE THE CAR HAD EFFECTIVELY MASKED.



EVEN AS SHE BREATHED THE PERFUME SHE HEARD A THIRD SHOT, AND THIS TIME SHE SAW A FIGURE--TOO FAR FROM WHERE SHE STOOD TO BE RECOGNIZABLE, EVEN IF IT HAD BEEN HER HUSBAND.



THE SOUND OF GUNS WAS NOT PARTICULARLY PLEASANT, BUT COULD SHE POSSIBLY TURN HER BACK ON SUCH A MYSTERY?

DISTANCES WERE DECEPTIVE IN SUCH UNMARKABLE TERRAIN. ONE SANDY HILLOCK LOOKED MUCH LIKE THE NEXT. SHE PICKED HER WAY AMONG THE SQUINTING CUCUMBER FOR FULLY TEN MINUTES BEFORE SHE BECAME CERTAIN THAT SHE HAD MISSED THE SPOT FROM WHICH PURSUED AND PURSUER HAD VANISHED--



--AND BY THAT TIME SHE WAS LOST IN A SEA OF GRASS-CRESTED KNOLLS. THE CRIES HAD LONG SINCE CEASED, THE SHOTS TOO. SHE WAS LEFT ONLY WITH THE SOUND OF GULLS, AND THE RASPING PIRATE OF CICADAS AROUND HER FEET.



DAMN, WHY DO I DO THESE THINGS?

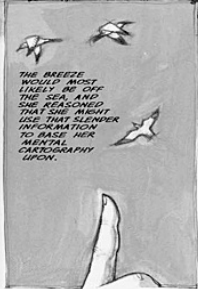
SHE SELECTED THE LARGEST HILLOCK IN THE VICINITY AND TRUGGED UP ITS FLANK, HER FEET UNCERTAIN IN THE SANDY SOIL, TO SEE IF THE VANTAGE POINT OFFERED A VIEW OF THE TRACK SHE'D LEFT, OR EVEN OF THE SEA.



ALL THAT WAS REVEALED AT THE SUMMIT WAS THE EXTENT OF HER OWN ISOLATION.



THE BREEZE WOULD MOST LIKELY BE OFF THE SEA, AND SHE REASONED THAT SHE MIGHT USE THAT SLENDER INFORMATION TO BASE HER MENTAL CARTOGRAPHY UPON.



BABEL'S CHILDREN



SURELY THE RUNNING MAN AND HIS THREE OVER-ATTENTIVE ADMIRERS HAD ORIGINATED HERE, BUT WITHOUT DIRECTIONS FROM SOMEBODY MIGHT SHE NOT WANDER AROUND FOREVER IN THIS WASTELAND AND NEVER FIND HER WAY BACK TO THE CAR?



ONLY WHEN IN SIGHT OF COMFORT WOULD SHE CONCEDE THE WEIGHT OF HER WEARINESS TO HERSELF.





THE YARD BELOW WAS MOTTLED WITH DOVE'S DROPPINGS: SEVERAL OF THE CULPRITS SAT IN A MYSTLE TREE AND GOGGED AT HER APPEARANCE.



HER PERVERSITY UNCHASTENED BY ADVENTURE, SHE FOLLOWED THE WALKWAY THAT LOOKED LEAST PROMISING...



...AND IT LED HER OUT OF THE SUN AND INTO A BALMY PASSAGE.



NOW, THE PIECES OF THIS MYSTERY FELL INTO PLACE: THE SECLUDED LOCATION, THE SILENCE, THE PLAINNESS OF THE YARDS AND WALKWAYS-- THIS WAS SURELY A RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT.



SHE HAD BEEN GODLESS SINCE EARLY ADOLESCENCE AND HAD SELDOM STEPPED OVER THE THRESHOLD OF A CHURCH IN THE INTERVENING TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. NOW, AT FORTY-ONE, SHE WAS FAST RECALL, AND SO FELT DOUBLY A TRESPASSER HERE.

BUT THEN, SHE WASN'T SEEKING SANCTUARY, WAS SHE? MERELY DIRECTIONS. SHE COULD ASK THEM AND GET GONE.

AS SHE ADVANCED ACROSS THE SUNLIT STONE SHE HAD THAT CURIOUS SENSATION OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH SHE ASSOCIATED WITH BEING SPIED UPON. IT WAS A SENSITIVITY HER LIFE WITH RONALD HAD SOPHISTICATED INTO A SIXTH SENSE.



HIS RIDICULOUS JEALOUSIES, WHICH HAD, ONLY THREE MONTHS EARLIER, ENDED THEIR MARRIAGE, HAD LED HIM TO SPYING STRATEGIES THAT WOULD NOT HAVE SHAMED THE AGENCIES OF WHITEHALL OR WASHINGTON. NOW SHE FELT NOT ONE BUT SEVERAL PAIRS OF EYES UPON HER.



NOBODY MADE ANY EFFORT TO CALL DOWN TO HER, HOWEVER. A MUTE GINGER, PERHAPS, THEIR VOW OF SILENCE SO PROFOUNDLY OBSERVED THAT SHE WOULD HAVE TO COMMUNICATE IN SIGN LANGUAGE? WELL, SO BE IT.

THEN SHE HEARD RUNNING FEET-- SEVERAL PRIORS, RUSHING TOWARD HER-- AND THE SOUND OF THE IRON GATES, CLANGING CLOSED. FOR SOME REASON, HER INSTINCTS TRIUMPHED OVER ITSELF AND ALARMED HER BLOOD STARTLED, IT LEAPED TO HER FACE AS HER EXHAUSTED LEGS BEGAN TO QUIVER.

TAPTAPTAPTAPT

SHE STOOD STOCK STILL, BEST NOT TO RUN, SHE THOUGHT, WITH OUR LADY AT YOUR BACK.

SHE TURNED TO FACE THE OWNERS OF THOSE URGENT FOOTSTEPS AND AS SHE DID SO CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE STONE VIRGIN'S HEAD MOVING A FRACTION. ITS BLUE EYES HAD FOLLOWED HER ACROSS THE YARD AND NOW WERE UNMISTAKABLY FOLLOWING HER BACK.

THERE WAS NO WORD OF EXPLANATION OFFERED, BUT THEN IN A PLACE THAT HARBORED ARMED MEN DRESSED AS NUNS A GLIMPSE OF SWEET REASON WAS DOUBTLESS AS RARE AS FEATHERED FROGS.

TO QUENCH HER THIRST DURING HER INCARCERATION, ONE OF THE NUNS HAD PROVIDED A BOTTLE OF PALATABLE KETSUNA, AND, TO COMPLETE THIS CATALOGUE OF INCONGRUITIES, THE BEST DEEP-DISH PIZZA SHE'D HAD THIS SIDE OF CHICAGO, ALICE, LOST IN WONDERLAND, COULD NOT HAVE THOUGHT IT CURIOUSER.



THERE
MAY HAVE
BEEN AN
ERROR.

THE CONCESSION CAME AFTER SEVERAL HOURS OF INTERROGATION BY THE MAN, WHO CLAIMED HIS NAME WAS MR. KLEIN. BENEATH HIS CALCULATED ENGLISH, VANESSA THOUGHT SHE SMELT THE HINT OF AN ACCENT. FRENCH? GERMAN? IT WAS ONLY WHEN HE PRODUCED SOME CHOCOLATE FROM HIS DESK THAT SHE DECIDED HE WAS SWISS.



AN ERROR? YOU'RE DAMN
RIGHT THERE'S BEEN AN ERROR!

WE'VE LOCATED
YOUR CAR. WE HAVE
ALSO CHECKED WITH
YOUR HOTEL. SO FAR,
YOUR STORY HAS
BEEN VERIFIED.

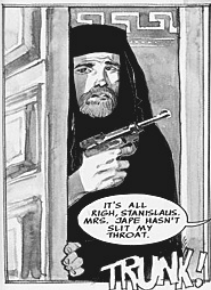
WELL, I'M
GLAD YOU'RE
SATISFIED.
NOW WILL YOU
LET ME GET
BACK TO MY
HOTEL? I'M
TIRED.



I'M
AFRAID THAT
WON'T BE
POSSIBLE.



LOOK
HERE,
YOU...



IT'S ALL
RIGHT, STANISLAUS.
MRS. JAFE HASN'T
SLIT MY
THROAT.

TRUNK!

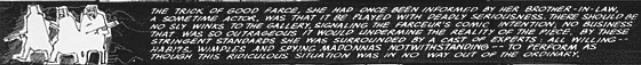


WHY?

WHY
WHAT?

THE
NUNS.

SLAM



SHE SLEPT WELL, HELPED ON HER WAY BY MISC. THE CONTENTS OF A BOTTLE OF WHISKY THAT SOME THOUGHTFUL PERSON HAD LEFT IN HER LITTLE ROOM WHEN SHE RETURNED TO IT.



MRS. JAPE...
MRS. JAPE
MAY WE HAVE
WORDS?

WHO
ARE
YOU?

HER HEAD FELT SWOLLEN, HER TONGUE LIKE A SUEDE GLOVE. THE OLD MAN'S BREATH WAS TWO PARTS STALE OZU TO ONE OF FRESH AIR. IT KEPT HER FROM PRESSING TOO CLOSE TO THE WINDOW, THOUGH HE BECKONED HER.



THE FEATURES,
SUNBURNED AND
LEATHERY, REMINDED
HER OF SOMBODY.

AN
ADMIRER.

DO I
KNOW
YOU?

YOU'RE MUCH
TOO YOUNG, BUT I
KNOW YOU. I WATCHED
YOU COME IN. I WANTED
TO WARN YOU, BUT I
DIDN'T HAVE TIME.

ARE YOU
A PRISONER
HERE TOO?

IN A
MANNER OF
SPEAKING,
TELL ME... DID
YOU SEE FLOYD?
HE ESCAPED
THE DAY BEFORE
YESTERDAY.

OH,
FLOYD WAS
THE MAN
THEY WERE
CHASING?

YES, HE SLIPPED OUT.
YOU SEE, THEY WENT AFTER--
THE CLOPS--AND LEFT THE
GATE OPEN. THE SECURITY
IS ENOUGH THESE DAYS--
NOT THAT I'M NOT PLEASED
YOU'RE HERE...

NOT THAT I
SAW, I WENT TO
LOOK, BUT THERE
WAS NO SIGN--

AM I MAYBE
HE DID GET AWAY
THEN.

HE LOOKED AT HER, WITH
SUCH AFFECTION, AND HIS
FACE, WHICH WAS THAT OF
A MASTER GLOWN, SEEMED
INCAPABLE OF FORGING
FEELING, FOR BETTER OR
WORSE, SHE TRUSTED HIM.
SHE HAD LITTLE CHOICE.

THERE WAS
SOME
DESPERATION
IN HIS EYES,
SHE THOUGHT;
SOME SORROW
HE FOUGHT
TO KEEP
SUBMERGED.

WE
HEARD
SHOTS. THEY
DIDN'T
GET HIM.
DID THEY?

IT HAD ALREADY OCCURRED
TO VANESSA THAT THIS
CONVERSATION MIGHT BE
A TRAP, THAT THE OLD MAN
WAS HER CAPTOR'S DUPE, AND
THIS WAS JUST
ANOTHER WAY TO SQUEEZE
INFORMATION FROM HER,
BUT HER INSTINCTS
INSTRUCTED HER OTHERWISE.

HELP ME
GET OUT. I
HAVE TO GET
OUT.



SO SOON? YOU ONLY JUST ARRIVED.

I'M NOT A THIEF. I DON'T LIKE BEING LOCKED UP.

OF COURSE YOU DON'T. I'M SORRY. IT'S JUST THAT A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN-- I NEVER HAD MUCH OF A WAY WITH WORDS...



ARE YOU SURE I DON'T KNOW YOU FROM SOMEWHERE? YOUR FACE IS SOMEHOW FAMILIAR.

REALLY? THAT'S VERY NICE. WE ALL THINK WE'RE FORGOTTEN HERE. YOU SEE.

ALL?



WE WERE SNATCHED AWAY SUCH A TIME AGO. MANY OF US WERE ONLY BEGINNING OUR RESEARCHES. THAT'S WHY FLOYD MADE A RUN FOR IT. HE WANTED TO DO A FEW MONTH'S DECENT WORK BEFORE THE END. I FEEL THE SAME SOMETIMES.

MY NAME IS HARVEY GOMAL. PROFESSOR HARVEY GOMAL... THOUGH THESE DAYS I FORGET WHAT I WAS PROFESSOR OF.

IT WAS A SINGULAR NAME, AND IT RANG BELLS, BUT VANESSA COULD AT PRESENT FIND NO TUNE IN THE CHIMES.

YOU DON'T REMEMBER, DO YOU?



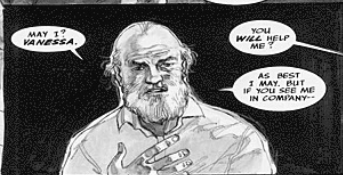
SHE WISHED SHE COULD LIE, BUT THAT MIGHT ALLEGIANTE THE MAN--THE ONLY VOICE OF SANITY SHE'D DISCOVERED HERE--MORE THAN THE TRUTH.

NO. I DON'T EXACTLY REMEMBER. MAYBE A CLUE?

SOMEONE'S COMING! CAN'T TALK NOW. MRS. JAFE.



CALL ME VANESSA.



MAY I? VANESSA.

YOU WILL HELP ME?

AS BEST I MAY, BUT IF YOU SEE ME IN COMPANY--



WE NEVER MET.

PRECISELY. AU REVOIR.



WHEN HER CUSTODIAN, AN AMIABLE THUG CALLED GUILLEMOT, ARRIVED SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, SHE WAS ALL SMILES.



WHEN YOU'RE DONE, I'LL ESCORT YOU TO MR. KLEIN.

YOU MEAN HE DOESN'T WANT THE PLEASURE OF MY COMPANY FOR BREAKFAST?

HER OUTBURST OF THE PREVIOUS DAY SEEMED TO HAVE BORNE SOME FRUIT.

WE HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE YOU THE RUN OF THE GROUNDS-- WITH GUILLENOT IN ATTENDANCE, OF COURSE. WE DON'T WANT YOUR STAY HERE TO BE UNPLEASANT... PERHAPS SOME SUN WILL IMPROVE YOUR DISPOSITION.



PERHAPS... AND A CHANGE OF CLOTHES AS WELL-- WHY, MR. KLEIN, YOU ARE ALL HEART!

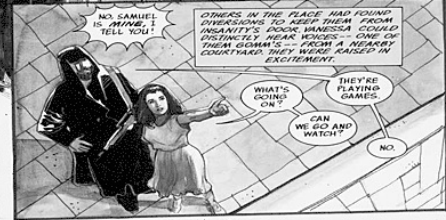


BUT THE CLOTHES AND NEW FREEDOMS WERE A WARNING FLAG TO VANESSA: RELEASE WAS NOT TO BE SWIFTLY FORTHCOMING. HOW LONG WOULD IT BE SHE TRIED TO CALCULATE, BEFORE THE RATHER OBTUSE MANAGER OF HER TINY HOTEL REALIZED THAT SHE WASN'T COMING BACK-- AND IN THAT EVENT, WHAT WOULD HE DO?

PERHAPS HE HAD ALREADY ALERTED THE AUTHORITIES. PERHAPS THEY WOULD FIND THE ABANDONED CAR AND TRACE HER TO THIS CURIOUS FORTRESS. ON THIS LAST POINT HER HOPES WERE DASHED THAT VERY MORNING, DURING HER CONSTITUTIONAL...



HER CAPTORS WERE NOT FOOLS. SHE MIGHT HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL SOMEBODY BACK IN ENGLAND BECAME CONCERNED AND ATTEMPTED TO TRACE HER WHEREABOUTS, DURING WHICH TIME SHE MIGHT WELL DIE OF BOREDOM.



NO, SAMUEL IS. DRIVE, TELL YOU!

OTHERS IN THE PLACE HAD FOUND DIVERSIONS TO KEEP THEM FROM INSANITY'S DOOR. VANESSA COULD DISTINCTLY HEAR VOICES-- ONE OF THEM GORMAN'S-- FROM A NEARBY COURTYARD. THEY WERE RAISED IN EXCITEMENT.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

THEY'RE PLAYING GAMES.

CAN WE GO AND WATCH?

NO.

GO, YOU SILLY THING!

SAMUEL, NO SITTING!

O'MON, YOU'RE ALMOST THERE!

FROGS, THEY'RE RACING FROGS.

I WONDERED.

BETTER NOT.



DESPITE GUILLENOT'S ADVICE, ONCE HER ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE SOUND OF THE GAMES SHE COULD NOT DRIVE THE DIN FROM HER HEAD. IT CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON, RISING AND FALLING, SOMETIMES LAUGHTER WOULD ERUPT, AS OFTEN, THERE WOULD BE ARGUMENTS. THEY WERE, LIKE CHILDREN, GORMAN AND HIS FRIENDS, THE WAY THEY FOUGHT OVER SUCH AN INCONSEQUENTIAL PURSUIT AS RACING FROGS, BUT IN LIEU OF MORE NOURISHING DIVERSIONS, COULD SHE BLAME THEM?

I HEARD YOU THIS MORNING, IN ONE OF THE COURTYARDS, AND THEN THIS AFTERNOON, TOO. YOU SEEMED TO BE HAVING A GOOD DEAL OF FUN.

OH, THE GAMES. IT WAS A BUSY DAY, SO MUCH TO BE SORTED OUT.

DO YOU THINK YOU COULD PERSUADE THEM TO LET ME JOIN YOU? I'M GETTING SO BORED IN HERE.

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? YOU'RE NOT CRIMINALS, ARE YOU?

FOUR. VANESSA. I WISH I COULD HELP, BUT IT'S PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE. WE'RE SO OVERWORKED AT THE MOMENT, ESPECIALLY WITH FLOYD'S ESCAPE.

OVERWORKED, SHE THOUGHT, RACING KROGS? FEAKING TO OUTEND, SHE DIDN'T VOICE THE DOUBT.

CRIMINALS?

I'M SORRY...

I SUPPOSE IT MUST STRIKE YOU AS OFF, OUR BEING LOCKED UP HERE. BUT NO, WE'RE NOT CRIMINALS.

WHAT THEN? WHAT'S THE BIG SECRET?

IF I TELL YOU, WILL YOU HELP US TO GET OUT OF HERE?

HOW?

YOUR CAR, IT'S AT THE FRONT.

YES, I SAW IT.

IF WE COULD GET TO IT, WOULD YOU DRIVE US?

HOW MANY OF YOU?

FOUR. THERE'S ME, THERE'S IKENIYA, THERE'S MOTTERSHEAD, AND GOLDBERG, OF COURSE. FLOYD'S PROBABLY OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, BUT HE'LL JUST HAVE TO LOOK AFTER HIMSELF, WON'T HE?

IT'S A SMALL CAR.

WE'RE SMALL PEOPLE. YOU SHRINK WITH AGE, YOU KNOW, LIKE DRIED FRUIT, AND WE'RE OLD. WITH FLOYD WE HAD THREE HUNDRED AND NINETY-EIGHT YEARS BETWEEN US.

ALL THAT BITTER EXPERIENCE, AND NOT ONE OF US WISE.



WE GOT
FLOYD!
CALL MR.
KLEIN!



THEY
FOUND HIM.
OH MY GOD.
THEY FOUND
HIM.
GOODBYE...!



VANESSA COULD
NOT CATCH MORE
THAN ONE IN
EVERY TEN WORDS,
BUT THE NEURAL
ASSAULT RAPIDLY
REDUCED THE
OLD MAN TO
TEARS.



I HOPE
THAT MAN
CHOKES ON HIS
NEXT PIECE OF
CHOCOLATE...

SO FAR, HER TIME HERE
HAD BROUGHT A CURIOUS
COLLECTION OF EXPERIENCES:
ONE MOMENT PLEASANT
(GOMAN'S SMILE, THE PIZZA,
THE SOUND OF GAMES PLAYED
IN A SIMILAR COURTYARD), THE
NEXT (THE INTERROGATION, THE
BULLYING) SHE'D JUST
WITNESSED) UNPALATABLE...



...AND YET SHE STILL WAS NO
NEARER TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT
THE FUNCTION OF THIS PRISON
WAS - WHY IT ONLY HAD FIVE INMATES
(SIX, IF SHE INCLUDED HERSELF)
AND ALL SO OLD - SHRUNK BY AGE,
GOMAN HAD SAID. BUT AFTER KLEIN'S
HUMILIATION OF FLOYD SHE WAS
NOW CERTAIN THAT NO SECRET,
HOWEVER PRESSING, WOULD KEEP
HER FROM JOINING GOMAN IN
HIS BID FOR FREEDOM.

THE PROFESSOR DID NOT COME BACK THAT EVENING, WHICH DISAPPOINTED HER. PERHAPS FLOYD'S RECAPTURE HAD MEANT STRICTER REGULATIONS ABOUT THE PLACE, SHE REASONED. THOUGH THAT PRINCIPLE SCARCELY APPLIED TO HER, SHE, IT SEEMED, WAS PRACTICALLY FORGOTTEN.

THOUGH GUILLENOT BROUGHT HER FOOD AND DRINK HE DID NOT STAY TO TEACH HER POKER AS THEY HAD ARRANGED, NOR WAS SHE ESCORTED OUT TO TAKE THE AIR.

LEFT IN THE STUFFY ROOM WITHOUT COMPANY, HER MIND UNDISTURBED BY ANY ENTERTAINMENT BUT COUNTING HER TOES, SHE RAPIDLY BECAME LISTLESS AND SLEEPY.

LATIN WAS NOT HER FORTE; SHE HOPED THE FINAL WORDS WERE AN ENDEARMENT, NOT AN INSTRUCTION.

VANESSA, be ready
Yours,
in saecula
saeculorum
H.G.

CLEARLY GOMM DIDN'T INTEND HER TO USE IT NOW, HOWEVER, BUT TO WAIT FOR SOME SIGNAL. BE READY, HE'D WRITTEN, EASIER SAID THAN DONE, OF COURSE.

IT WAS SO TEMPTING, WITH THE DOOR OPEN AND THE PASSAGEWAY OUT TO THE SUN CLEAR, TO FORGET GOMM AND THE OTHERS AND MAKE A BREAK FOR IT. BUT H.G. HAD DOUBTLESS TAKEN SOME RISK ACQUIRING THE KEY, SHE OWED HIM HER ALLEGIANCE.

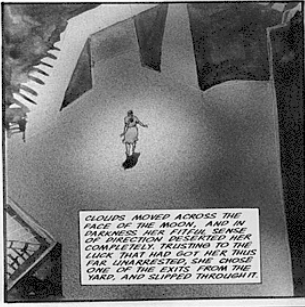
BUT GOMM'S CALL DIDN'T COME. THE AFTERNOON DRAGGED ON INTO EVENING. GUILLENOT APPEARED WITH ANOTHER PIZZA AND A CAN OF COCA-COLA AND BEFORE SHE KNEW IT NIGHT HAD FALLEN AND ANOTHER DAY WAS GONE.

SOMETIME AFTER MIDNIGHT SHE DECIDED THAT WAITING HERE FOR THE AXE TO FALL WAS NOT HER STYLE AT ALL, AND SHE WOULD BE WISE TO DO AS FLOYD HAD DONE, AND RUN FOR IT.

PERHAPS THEY WOULD COME BY COVER OF DARKNESS, SHE THOUGHT, BUT THEY DIDN'T. THE MOON ROSE, IT SEEMED SMIRKING, AND THERE WAS STILL NO SIGN OF H.G. OR THIS PROMISED EXORCIS.



THERE WAS NO SIGN OF HUMAN PRESENCE -- BUT SHE REMEMBERED THE WATCHFUL VIRGIN WHO'D FIRST SPIED ON HER. NOTHING WAS TO BE TRUSTED HERE.



CLOUDS MOVED ACROSS THE FACE OF THE MOON, AND IN DARKNESS HER FITFUL SENSE OF DIRECTION DESERTED HER COMPLETELY. TRUSTING TO THE LUCK THAT HAD GOT HER THUS FAR UNARRESTED, SHE CHOSE ONE OF THE EXITS FROM THE YARD, AND SLIPPED THROUGH IT.



A LIGHT BREEZE TEASED THE LEAVES OF TWO ENTWINED LAUREL-TREES IN THE CENTER OF THE YARD; NIGHT INSECTS TUNED UP IN THE WALLS.



PEACEABLE AS IT WAS, THE SQUARE OFFERED NO PROMISING ROUTE THAT SHE COULD SEE, AND SHE WAS ABOUT TO GO BACK THE WAY SHE'D COME WHEN THE MOON SHOOK OFF ITS VEILS...



...AND LIT THE YARD FROM
WALL TO WALL.

IT WAS EMPTY BUT FOR THE LAUREL
TREES AND THEIR SHADOW, BUT THAT
SHADOW FELL ACROSS AN ELABORATE
DESIGN THAT HAD BEEN PAINTED ONTO
THE PAVEMENT OF THE YARD.



SHE STARED AT IT, TOO CURIOUS TO RETREAT, THOUGH SHE COULD MAKE NO SENSE OF THE THING AT FIRST. THE PATTERN SEEMED TO BE JUST THAT: A PATTERN. THEN IT DAWNED ON HER THAT SHE WAS VIEWING THE ENTIRE PICTURE UPSIDE DOWN.



THOUGH MANY OF THE SYMBOLS WERE IDIOSYNCRATIC, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE MAP WAS RIFE WITH POLITICAL DETAIL. CONTESTED BORDERS, TERRITORIAL WATERS, EXCLUSION ZONES. MANY OF THESE HAD BEEN DRAWN AND REDRAWN IN CHALK, AS IF IN RESPONSE TO DAILY INTELLIGENCE.

IN SOME REGIONS, WHERE EVENTS WERE PARTICULARLY FRAUGHT, THE LAND MASS WAS ALL BUT OBSCURED BY SCRIBBLING. SHE DIDN'T NEAR THE FOOTSTEPS AT THE NORTH POLE UNTIL THEIR OWNER WAS STEPPING OUT OF HIDING AND INTO THE MOONLIGHT.



I COULDN'T GO ON WAITING, HARVEY. THIS IS NO PLACE TO TAKE A HOLIDAY.

YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE.

IT'S HOPELESS. ~~HOPELESS~~. YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR GETAWAY ON YOUR OWN. FORGET ABOUT US. THEY'LL NEVER LET US OUT. THE TRUTH'S TOO TERRIBLE

WHAT? TRUTH?

FORGET ABOUT IT. FORGET WE EVER MET.

I WILL NOT. I HAVE TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE.

PERHAPS YOU KNOW. PERHAPS THE WHOLE WORLD SHOULD KNOW.

WHAT'S THE MAP FOR?

THIS IS WHERE WE PLAY.

OF COURSE, IT WASN'T ALWAYS GAMES. BUT SYSTEMS DECAY, YOU KNOW. IT'S AN IRREFUTABLE CONDITION COMMON TO BOTH MATTER AND IDEAS. YOU START OFF WITH FINE INTENTIONS AND IN TWO DECADES... TWO DECADES... WE'RE PLAYING WITH FROGS.

YOU'RE NOT MAKING MUCH SENSE, HARVEY. ARE YOU DELIBERATELY OBFUSC OR IS THIS SENILITY?

THERE WAS A DAY OF SANITY, BACK IN 1962, IN WHICH IT OCCURRED TO THE POTENTATES THAT THEY WERE ON THE VERGE OF DESTROYING THE WORLD. IF ANNIHILATION WAS TO BE PREVENTED, THEY DECIDED, OUR BETTER INSTINCTS HAD TO PREVAIL. THE MIGHTY GATHERED BEHIND LOCKED DOORS AT A SYMPOSIUM IN GENEVA. THE LEADERS OF POLITBUREOS AND PARLIAMENTS, CONGRESSES, SENATES -- THE LORDS OF THE EARTH -- IN ONE COLOSSAL DEBATE.

AND IT WAS DECIDED THAT IN THE FUTURE WORLD AFFAIRS SHOULD BE OVERSEEN BY A SPECIAL COMMITTEE, MADE UP OF GREAT AND INFLUENTIAL MINDS LIKE MY OWN, AND INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL ELITE, WHOSE COLLECTIVE WISDOM WOULD BRING A NEW GOLDEN AGE. THAT WAS THE THEORY ANYWAY.

AND FOR A WHILE, IT WORKED. IT REALLY WORKED. THERE WERE ONLY THIRTEEN OF US -- TO KEEP SOME CONSENSUS. A RUSSIAN, A FEW OF US EUROPEANS, DEAR HONGKONG, OF COURSE, A NEW ZEALANDER, A COUPLE OF AMERICANS... WE WERE A HIGH-POWERED BUNCH. TWO NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS. MYSELF INCLUDED.

ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING OUR CONCERNS WERE TERRITORIAL. HELPING TO DIVIDE THE WORLD UP, REGULATING LITTLE WARS, SO THEY DIDN'T BECOME BIG WARS. KEEPING DICTATORSHIPS FROM GETTING TOO FULL OF THEMSELVES. WE BECAME THE WORLD'S DOMESTICS, CLEANING UP WHEREVER THE DIRT GOT TOO THICK. IT WAS A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY, BUT WE SHOULD'ERD IT QUITE HAPPILY. I KATHER PLEASED US, AT THE BEGINNING, TO THINK THAT WE THIRTEEN WERE SHAPING THE WORLD AND THAT NOBODY BUT THE HIGHEST ECHELONS OF GOVERNMENT KNEW THAT WE EVEN EXISTED.

THIS, THOUGHT VANESSA, WAS THE
MAYHEM CHINESEMAN HAD TALKED
GOMMA WAS INDISPUTABLY INSANE,
BUT WHAT A HEROIC INSANITY! AND
IT WAS ESSENTIALLY HARMLESS--
HE SURELY WASN'T CAPABLE
OF DOING DAMAGE.



IT SEEMS
UNFAIR, THAT
YOU'RE LOCKED
AWAY IN
HERE.

YOU'RE NOT WELL,
HARVEY. I DON'T THINK
YOU'RE DANGEROUS--
BUT--

WAIT A
MINUTE. WHAT DO YOU
THINK I'VE BEEN TELLING
YOU? I GO TO ALL
THIS TROUBLE--

HARVEY,
IT'S A FINE
STORY.

STORY?
WHAT DO YOU
MEAN, STORY? OH... I
SEE, YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME,
DO YOU? THAT'S IT! I JUST
TOLD YOU THE GREATEST
SECRET IN THE WORLD, AND
YOU DON'T BELIEVE
ME!

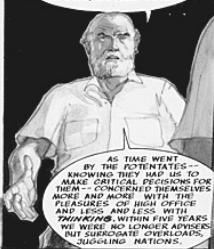
I'M NOT SAYING
YOU'RE LYING.

IS THAT IT?
YOU THINK I'M
A LUNATIC!



HIS VOICE ECHOED AROUND THE
RECTANGULAR WORLD ALMOST
IMMEDIATELY THERE WERE VOICES
FROM SEVERAL OF THE BUILDINGS,
AND FAST UPON THOSE THE
THUNDER OF FEET.

WELL, THAT'S FOR OUR OWN
SECURITY, OF COURSE. IMAGINE THE
CHAOS IF SOME ANARCHIST GROUP
FOUND OUT WHERE WE OPERATED?
FROWN, AND DID AWAY WITH US. **WE
RUN THE WORLD.** IT WASN'T
MEANT TO BE THAT WAY, BUT
AS I SAY, SYSTEMS DECAY.

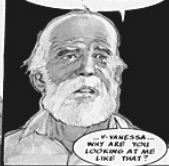


AS TIME WENT
BY THE POTENTATES--
KNOWING THEY HAD US TO
MAKE CRITICAL DECISIONS FOR
THEM-- CONCERNED THEMSELVES
MORE AND MORE WITH THE
PLEASURES OF HIGH OFFICE
AND LESS AND LESS WITH
THINKING. WITHIN FIVE YEARS
WE WERE NO LONGER ADVISERS
BUT SURROGATE OVERLOADS,
JUGGLING NATIONS.

AFTER A DECADE OR SO, THE
PRESSURE TO TELL... HALF OF
THE COMMITTEE ARE ALREADY
DEAD. GOLOVATENKO THREW
HIMSELF OUT OF A WINDOW.

BUCHANAN -- THE NEW
ZEALANDER -- HAD SYPHILIS
AND DIDN'T KNOW IT. OLD AGE
CAUGHT UP WITH DEAR
YONIKYO, AND BERNHEIMER
AND SOURBUTTS, ALL OF
THEM SPENT THEIR FINAL DAYS
ON THE COMMITTEE, BUT
THE REST OF US--

--WE WANT A LITTLE
FREEDOM BEFORE WE DIE.
AND WE THOUGHT YOU COULD
HELP US, YOU SEE...

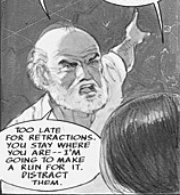


VANESSA--
WHY ARE YOU
LOOKING AT ME
LIKE THAT?



NOW
LOOK WHAT
YOU'VE
DONE.

I'VE
DONE? LOOK
H.E., THIS
DOESN'T
MEAN--



TOO LATE
FOR RETRACTIONS.
YOU STAY WHERE
YOU ARE-- I'M
GOING TO MAKE
A RUN FOR IT.
DISTRACT
THEM.

IF I'M MAD,
YOU WANT ME
THAT WAY.





POW
POW



HOLD
IT RIGHT
THERE!

ALL
RIGHT.



MEA
CULPA!



WHAT ARE
YOU DOING OUT
AT THIS TIME
OF NIGHT?

JUST
STAR GAZING.
THAT'S ALL.

YOU WEREN'T
ALONE.



THAT'S
TRUE. I
WASN'T
ALONE.



VANESSA'S HEART
SANK. THERE WAS
NO ROUTE BACK
TO HER ROOM
WITHOUT CROSSING
THE OPEN COURTYARD,
AND EVERY NOW,
WITH THE ALARM
RAISED, GUILLEMOT
WOULD PROBABLY
BE CHECKING
ON HER.

HAD SHE OFFENDED THE OLD MAN
SO MUCH HE WAS NOW GOING TO
BETRAY HER?



I SAW
THE WOMAN
YOU BROUGHT
IN--

WHERE?

CLIMBING
OVER THE
WALL.

JESUS
WEPT!



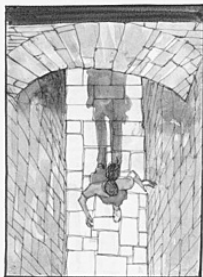
I SAID TO
HER, I SAID, YOU'LL
BREAK YOUR NECK
CLIMBING OVER THE
WALL. YOU'D BE BETTER
WAITING UNTIL THEY
OPEN THE GATE--



OPEN THE
GATE. HE WASN'T
SUCH A LUNATIC
AFTER ALL.

PHILLIPENKO,
ESCORT HARVEY BACK
TO HIS DORMITORY, THE REST
OF YOU, FOLLOW ME!

WIRESSA WAITED
UNTIL EVERY
LAST SOUND
HAD DIED, AND
THEN SLIPPED
OUT OF HIDING,
TAKING THE
ROUTE THE
DISPATCHED
GUARDS HAD
FOLLOWED.



AS THE OLD MAN HAD PROTESTED
WHEN THEY'D FIRST MET, SECURITY
WAS WOEFULLY INADEQUATE,
AND SHE THANKED GOD FOR IT.



SOME
CHOCOLATE,
MRS. JAPE?



THIS IS A LUNATIC ASYLUM. NOTHING MORE NOR LESS, YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO HOLD ME HERE.

YOU SPOKE TO GOMM, AND HE TO YOU.

WHAT IF HE DID?

WHAT DID HE TELL YOU?

I WANT TO KNOW, MRS. JAFE.

HE TOLD ME NONSENSE. HE'S INSANE. I THINK YOU'RE ALL INSANE.

WHAT NONSENSE DID HE TELL YOU? I'D LIKE TO KNOW, MRS. JAFE. HUMOR ME.

HE SAID THERE WAS SOME KIND OF COMMITTEE AT WORK HERE THAT MADE DECISIONS ABOUT WORLD POLITICS AND THAT HE WAS ONE OF THEM. THAT WAS IT, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH.

AND?

AND I GENTLY TOLD HIM HE WAS OUT OF HIS MIND.

MR. GOMM IS A PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIC. HE CAN BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, GIVEN HALF A CHANCE YOU WERE PRETTY LUCKY.

AND THE OTHERS? HE'S NOT ALONE. I'VE HEARD THEM

THEY'RE ALL DERANGED, THROUGH THEIR CONDITIONS VARY. AND IN THEIR TIME, UNLIKELY AS IT MAY SEEM, THEY'VE ALL BEEN KILLERS. SOME OF THEM MULTIPLE KILLERS. THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE THE PLACE TO THEMSELVES, HIDDEN AWAY.

THAT'S WHY THE OFFICERS ARE ARMED.

WHEN MY INVESTIGATIONS ARE COMPLETE. IN THE MEANWHILE, YOUR COOPERATION WOULD BE APPRECIATED. IF MR. GOMM OR ANY OTHER PATIENT TRIES TO CO-OPT YOU INTO SOME PLAN OR OTHER, PLEASE REPORT THEM TO ME IMMEDIATELY. WILL YOU DO THAT?

I SUPPOSE...

AND PLEASE REFRAIN FROM ANY FURTHER ESCAPE ATTEMPTS. THE NEXT ONE COULD PROVE FATAL.

VANESSA WAS ABOUT TO ASK WHY THEY WERE REQUIRED TO MASQUERADE AS NUNS, BUT KLEM WAS NOT ABOUT TO GIVE HER AN OPPORTUNITY.

BELIEVE ME, IT'S AS INCONVENIENT FOR ME AS IT IS IRRITATING FOR YOU TO BE HERE.

THEN LET ME GO.

WHICH, OF ALL THE ROUTES TO THE TRUTH THAT LAY BEFORE HER, WAS THE UNWAKEABLEST PATH. SHE HAD BEEN GIVEN SEVERAL ALTERNATIVES: BY GOMM, BY KLEIN, BY HER OWN COMMON SENSE. ALL OF THEM WERE TEMPTINGLY IMPROBABLE, ALL LIKE THE PATH THAT HAD BROUGHT HER HERE, UNMARKED AS TO THEIR FINAL DESTINATION.

SHE SUFFERED THE CONSEQUENCE OF HER PERVERSITY IN FOLLOWING THAT TRACK OF COURSE. HERE SHE WAS, WEARY AND BATTERED, LOCKED UP WITH LITTLE HOPE OF ESCAPE. BUT THAT PERVERSITY WAS HER NATURE -- PERHAPS, AS RONALD HAD ONCE SAID, THE ONE INDISPUTABLE FACT ABOUT HER. IF SHE DISREGARDED THAT INSTINCT NOW, DESPITE ALL IT HAD BROUGHT HER TO, SHE WAS LOST. SHE LAY AWAKE, TURNING THE AVAILABLE ALTERNATIVES OVER IN HER HEAD. BY MORNING SHE HAD MADE UP HER MIND.



SHE WAITED ALL DAY, HOPING GOMM WOULD COME. BUT SHE WASN'T SURPRISED WHEN HE FAILED TO SHOW. IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT EVENTS OF THE PREVIOUS EVENING HAD LANDED HIM IN DEEPER TROUBLE THAN EVEN HE COULD TALK HIS WAY OUT OF.



GUILEMOT CAME AND WENT, WITH FOOD, WITH DRINK -- AND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE AFTERNOON -- WITH PLAYING CARDS.

SHE PICKED UP THE GIST OF FIVE-CARD POKER QUITE RAPIDLY, AND THEY PASSED A CONTENTED HOUR OR TWO PLAYING, WHILE THE AIR CARRIED SHOUTS FROM THE COURTYARD WHERE THE REDLAMITES WERE RACING FROGS.



DO YOU THINK YOU COULD ARRANGE FOR ME TO HAVE A BATH, OR AT LEAST A SHOWER?

IT'S GETTING SO THAT I DON'T LIKE MY OWN COMPANY.



I'LL FIND OUT FOR YOU.

WOULD YOU THAT'S VERY KIND.



HE RETURNED AN HOUR LATER TO TELL HER THAT DISPENSATION HAD BEEN SOUGHT AND GRANTED.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPANY ME TO THE SHOWERS?

ARE YOU GOING TO SCRUB MY BACK?



PLEASE FOLLOW ME.



THE FACILITIES HE BROUGHT HER TO WERE FAR FROM PRIMITIVE, AND SHE REGRETTED, WALKING INTO THE MIRRORRED BATHROOM, THAT ACTUALLY WASHING WAS NOT HIGH ON HER LIST OF PRIORITIES.

I'LL BE OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

THAT'S REASSURING.



NOW YOU'RE
GOING TO TAKE
ME TO MR. GOMM
AND THE OTHERS.
QUICKLY AND
QUIETLY.

AND
IF YOU
TRY TO DO
ANYTHING
CLEVER, I'LL
SHOOT YOU
IN THE BACK.
I KNOW IT'S
NOT VERY
MANLY, BUT
THEN I'M NOT A
MAN. I'M JUST AN
UNPREDICTABLE
WOMAN. SO
TREAT ME
VERY
CAREFULLY.

HE LED HER OUT OF
THE BUILDING AND
THROUGH A SERIES
OF PASSAGEWAYS
THAT TOOK THEM--
OR SO SHE GUESSED--
TOWARD THE BELL
TOWER AND THE
COMPLEX THAT
CLUSTERED
ABOUT IT.

SHE HAD ALWAYS
ASSUMED THIS, THE HEART
OF THE FORTRESS, TO BE
A CHAPEL. SHE COULD
NOT HAVE BEEN MORE
WRONG.



IT BRIEFLY OCCURRED TO
HER THAT THE PLACE HAD
BEEN BUILT TO WITHSTAND
A NUCLEAR ATTACK, AN
IMPRESSION REINFORCED BY
THE FACT THAT THE CORRIDORS
ALL LED DOWN. IF THIS
WAS AN ASYLUM, IT WAS
BUILT TO HOUSE SOME
RARE LUNATICS.

WHAT IS
THIS PLACE?

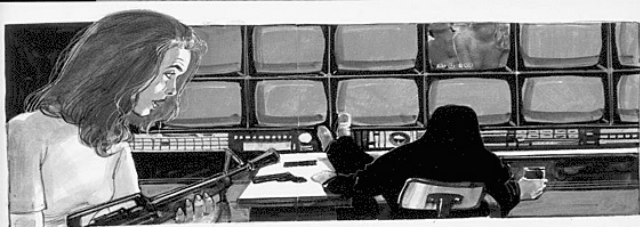
WE CALL
IT THE BOUDOIR.
IT'S WHERE
EVERYTHING
HAPPENS.

WELL--
NOT MUCH
HAPPENING
TODAY.



GOD
DAMN
IT!





BRE BREE

WAKE UP, YOU OLD BUGGERS.

THE ALARM'S RINGING.

THEY'LL BE HERE SOON

BUT WE'RE OUTNUMBERED. WE'LL NEVER GET OUT ALIVE.

SHE'S RIGHT. IT'S NO USE.

SHUT UP, GOLDBERG. SHE'S GOT A GUN. HASN'T SHE?

ONE. ONE GUN AGAINST ALL OF THEM.

I'M GOING BACK TO BED.

THIS IS A CHANCE TO ESCAPE. PROBABLY THE ONLY CHANCE WE'LL EVER GET.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE GAMES?

FORGET THE GAMES. LET THEM STEW AWHILE.

IT'S TOO LATE. HEAR THAT -- THEY'RE COMING. WE'RE TRAPPED.

GOOD.

YOU ARE INSANE.

YOU CAN STILL SHOOT US.

I DON'T WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE THAT MUCH.

THREATEN IT! THREATEN IT! TELL THEM IF THEY TRY ANYTHING YOU'LL SHOOT US ALL!

BE GENTLE.



EVERY STEP THEY TOOK, VANESSA EXPECTED A BULLET TO FIND HER. BUT MR. KLEIN WAS CLEARLY TOO CONCERNED FOR THE HEALTH OF THE ANCESTRALS TO RISK CALLING HER BLUFF. THEY REACHED THE OPEN AIR WITHOUT INCIDENT.









MAYBE THE LOSS OF BLOOD WAS MAKING HER IRRESPONSIBLE, BUT VANESSA COULDN'T HELP LAUGHING. FOUR HUNDRED LBS AND HERSELF IN A THREE-DOOR DRIVING AROUND IN THE DARK-- ONLY A MADMAN WOULD HAVE TAKEN THIS SERIOUSLY.

AND THERE WAS THE FINAL AND INCONTESTABLE PROOF THAT THESE PEOPLE WEREN'T THE LUNATICS KLEIN HAD MARKED THEM AS. FOR THEY SAW THE HUMOR IN IT TOO.

SOMEWHERE
OVER THE
RAINBOW...



AND IF-- AS HER DIZZIED MIND HAD CONCLUDED-- THESE WERE CAPTIVES AS SANE AS HERSELF, THEN WHAT OF THE TALE THAT GOMM HAD TOLD? WAS THAT TRUE, TOO? WAS IT POSSIBLE THAT ARMAGEDDON HAD BEEN KEPT AT BAY BY THESE FEW GIGGLING GERIATRICS?



THEY'RE
GAINING
ON US!



THERE!
THERE'S ANOTHER
TRACK! TRY THAT!
TRY THAT!



WHY?
ON ON WHY
CAN'T I...



WE'RE NOT
GOING TO MAKE
IT. WE'RE ALL
GOING TO
DIE.



WHERE
ARE WE
GOING?

HAVEN'T
A CLUE, HAVE
YOU?

WHEREVER THEY WERE
HEADING, THEY WERE GOING
AT A FAIR SPEED. THIS
TRACK WAS FLATTER THAN
THE ONE THEY'D LEFT, AND
GOMM WAS TAKING FULL
ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT.

WE'RE
LOSING
THEM! WE'RE
LOSING
THEM!

A COMMON EXHILARATION
SEIZED ALL THE TRAVELERS
NOW, AND THEY BEGAN TO
SING ALONG WITH H.G.
THEY WERE SINGING SO
LOUDLY THAT GOMM COULDN'T
HEAR MOTTER'SHEAD
INFORM HIM THAT THE
ROAD AHEAD SEEMED
TO DISAPPEAR.

♪
...AND AWAKE UP
WHERE THE CLOUDS
ARE FAR...
♫

WRRRRM!

FLOYD?



DIDN'T HE EXPLAIN? THEY PLAYED GAMES, MRS. JAFE. WHEN THEY BECAME BORED WITH SWEET REASON AND THE SOUND OF THEIR OWN VOICES, THEY GAVE UP DEBATE AND TOOK TO FLIPPING COINS.

AND RACING FROGS OF COURSE THAT WAS ALWAYS A FAVORITE.

YOU TH CARE? AS L IN THE PUB DOES IT MA WHAT VERE SROLTING WAS AR

BUT THE GOVERNMENTS-- SURELY THEY DIDN'T JUST ACCEPT.

I THINK THEY'RE LONG AS THEY'RE LIE EYE WHAT HITTER TO THEM MAGE THEY'RE, OR HOW IT RIVED AT?

YOU THINK THEY CARE? AS LONG AS THEY'RE IN THE PUBLIC EYE WHAT DOES IT MATTER TO THEM WHAT VERBIAGE THEY'RE SPOUTING, OR HOW IT WAS ARRIVED AT?

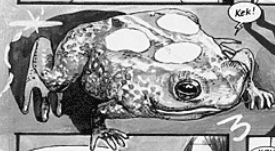
WHY NOT?
IT HAS A VERY
RESPECTABLE TRADITION.
NATIONS HAVE FALLEN
ON DECISIONS DIVINED
FROM THE ENTRAILS
OF SHEEP.

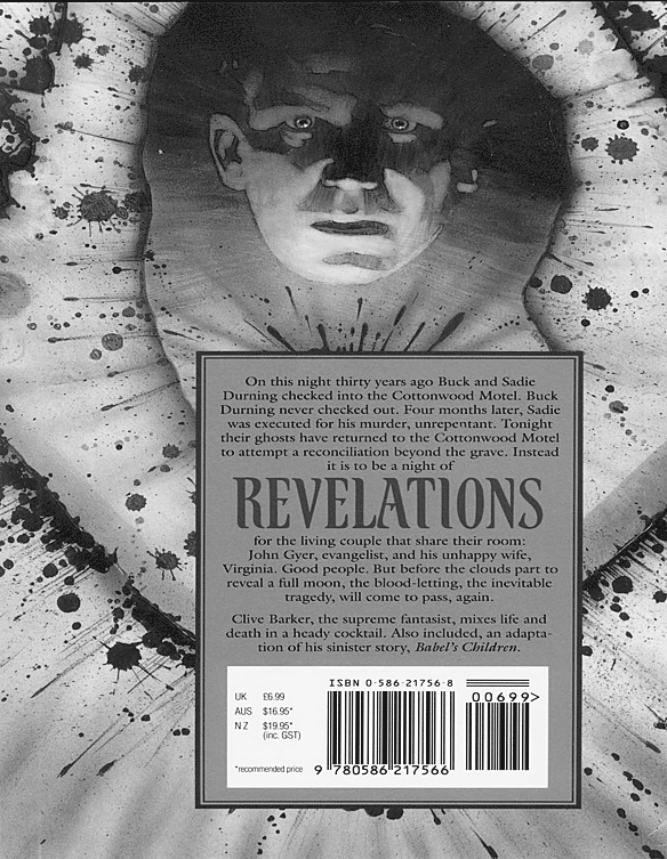
IT'S
PREPOSTEROUS

I AGREE. BUT
I ASK YOU, IN ALL
HONESTY, IS IT ANY MORE
TERRIFYING THAN LEAVING
THE POWER IN
THEIR HANDS?

BETTER
THE FROGS.

**BETTER
THE FROGS.**





On this night thirty years ago Buck and Sadie Durning checked into the Cottonwood Motel. Buck Durning never checked out. Four months later, Sadie was executed for his murder, unrepentant. Tonight their ghosts have returned to the Cottonwood Motel to attempt a reconciliation beyond the grave. Instead it is to be a night of

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